

























RENFREW OF THE  
ROYAL MOUNTED













"I AM TEH-NAH-GAT, THE CHIEFTAIN OF THESE PEOPLE."



# RENFREW OF THE ROYAL MOUNTED

BY

LAURIE YORKE ERSKINE



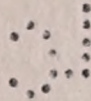
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY  
NEW YORK :: MCMXXII :: LONDON

*copy 2*



PZ 7  
E 74  
Re  
copy 2

COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY



298233  
22

Copyright, 1921, by The Sprague Publishing Company

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



TO  
MY MOTHER  
MARGERY ERSKINE







# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE MAN FROM THE NORTH . . . . .	I
II. CHASING GHOSTS . . . . .	23
III. THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST . . . . .	50
IV. THE CLOSED DOOR . . . . .	69
V. THE FEAR OF WHITE WATER . . . . .	83
VI. MACKENZIE COMES BACK . . . . .	97
VII. ONE WHO RODE ALONE . . . . .	110
VIII. TRAVELING LIGHT . . . . .	132
IX. THE PRICE . . . . .	151
X. THE YELLOW DOG . . . . .	159
XI. THE MAN IN THE SWAMP . . . . .	175
XII. THE LAST LAUGH . . . . .	187
XIII. MAD! . . . . .	210
XIV. NEAR TO THE END . . . . .	230
XV. THE VERY END . . . . .	247







# RENFREW *of the* ROYAL MOUNTED

## CHAPTER I

### THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

"HE's tall," Alan told the other fellows. "Over six feet, I guess. He always wears riding clothes, and he walks with a sort of spring, like a woodsman. He is fair, and his face is very bronzed. He looks a lot like the picture of General Custer I think, only younger, and he keeps his hair cut short, and he is clean shaven."

Also, a thing Alan did not mention, there were his eyes. Renfrew had an impassive countenance, and all the emotions which men usually betray in their facial expression were reflected only in his gray eyes which were very cool and clear. Often Alan found them seeking his own with so much of understanding in them that Alan knew here was a friend indeed; that before all his other friends he could hold this tall young man. And Alan was right. The two were to be bound in the strong friendship of man for man in many adventures to come.



This friendship, these adventures, were all started with the breaking of ground for a house, and they were built up with the house, rising as the bricks rose, tier upon tier into a lasting edifice.

The house grew far back in the wooded hills which beautifully surround Walney, a suburb of a great city. It was away from the Country Club and away from the highway, and the name of the builder was for a long time unknown. Walney folk began to gossip about it at the breaking of the ground, and they pursued their speculations while the bricks uprose. But no inquiries elicited the builder's name and curiosity grew resentful. Especially the folks on the hill resented it, because it was they who upheld the social tradition of Walney, and they expected all who built there to make themselves known so that they could be referred to properly in Dunn and Bradstreet's. Could this be a snob, who is a person who does not wish to know you? Or was it, even worse, some person, newly rich, whom one does not wish to know? The mystery irritated Walney folk.

But it was no mystery to Alan MacNeil.

There was a young man associated with the building of that house from the very start, and Alan, curious regarding the operations, had early made a friend of him. The young man always rode, or had near him, a glistening black mare of great height and fine spirit, and he usually had a dog or two following at



## THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

---

his heels,—Alan liked best a huge brindle staghound with a shaggy coat and straight, powerful legs. The young man, in short, carried with him the whole clean spirit of out-of-doors, and had about him the flavor of adventure. His name, Alan discovered, was Renfrew—Douglas Renfrew.

As the house neared completion and the name of the builder became spread about the town, the friendship of the man and the boy developed. Later, Alan brought Billy Loomis, Bruce Currie, Paul Hurlbut, Dick Rose, Howard Hough, Phil Mayo, and all the rest of his comrades to meet his new chum, and Renfrew seemed remarkably able to meet with his youthful guests and to entertain them in his silent, friendly manner. Alan was just fourteen years old that spring and the others were of a like age.

The boys used to come to a copse of cedars within the grounds, a stone's throw from the red brick house. They would sit there for long afternoons making stories and weaving legends. Here Renfrew would come and find them when he came; sometimes appearing on the glistening black mare, sometimes on foot; always bringing with him the spirit of open places and the vague air of adventure.

After he occupied the house with the furniture, he betrayed his presence to the boys by the clacking of a typewriter within, and they would wait until he stopped his task, which seemed interminable, and came



out to play catch with them, or to sit and urge them to tell him of themselves.

On this, the great afternoon, the afternoon of the discovery, Alan had come with the boys to the cedar copse, and, waiting, they found that the typewriter was silent. It was a sweetly scented afternoon, Alan remembered; an afternoon in mid-spring, of still air and of fresh green leaves which were transparent under the sun. It had rained the night before and the odor of the earth was in the air.

"He must be away," said Bub Currie. "He's in the city a lot lately."

"He might be right behind you now," said Alan. "That's the way he comes. It's great."

"Listen!" said Bub.

Several of the boys had heard, and all of them were silent as they lay about on the soft turf and listened. It was a sound which they had never heard come from the red brick house before—the sound of a piano played perfectly. The music was elfin, with oft-repeated minor chords, and a tempo which suggested the movement of wild things in open green places. It was "The Dance of the Gnomes," by Grieg, and it was a haunting piece.

The boys always came to this place in a spirit of mystery—not boisterous; so they yielded to the spell of the music and were quiet. For a time the music filled the country-side about them and accompanied



## THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

---

pleasantly the whisper of the trees and the splashing of a brook which tumbled across the grounds.

There was not a doubt in the minds of the boys that the hidden musician was their friend himself, and when the music stopped they voiced their appreciation with cheers and with demands for more. Then the door opened, and there, framed in the doorway, stood a gray-haired woman, smiling. Smiling with kindly gray eyes, gray eyes which seemed to understand a boy. The boys leaped to their feet, quite astonished by her unexpected appearance.

"My mother," said a quiet, clear voice in their midst, and it was the young man, quite near them with the great staghound pushing its way among the boys and licking them prodigiously. That is how he introduced her, as his mother, mentioning no names and examining every boy with his direct gaze.

The boys found that they liked the gray-haired lady very well, and they felt that they had known her for years. She showed them the inside of the red brick house, and they were enchanted. Had any one else in the world offered to show them any other house, it would not have interested them at all.

Afterward, when they stood in the copse once more, Renfrew, who had stopped inside for a moment, rejoined them.

"I'd ask you fellows to spend the afternoon here," he said, "and stay to supper"—six pairs of eyes lit up



—"but, of course, your people would hardly be prepared to have you do that."

There followed an eloquent chorus.

"My mother wouldn't care!"

"My mother wouldn't mind where I eat."

"I never have to let mother know!"

"I eat anywhere I like."

Renfrew regarded the boys thoughtfully for a moment.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "another time, perhaps."

Further protestations of independence and of utter freedom followed this ultimatum, while the young man regarded the boys steadily. Then he spoke again.

"Would you fellows like to hear a story?" he asked.

Unanimously, with a great voice, they said they would.

So, spread about him on the turf, they listened to "The Story of the Man from the North."

"This," said the young man, "is the story of a boy who ran away. His name was Carling—Jimmy Carling—and when he was seventeen he ran away. He did not run away in anger, because of an unjust punishment, nor had he done any wrong. At home he had been more happy, I believe, than he deserved. He ran away from something of which this story will tell you, and he went with his mother's permission, although he never knew how reluctantly it was given.



## THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

---

"He had longed always to see the land which lay beyond the hills which bound the world he lived in, and it was into that land he made his way to seek for adventure. And he found it—it was always his luck to be present when things happened.

"He started his ramblings in southern Texas, and from there he made his way into Mexico, where an old friend of his family was a missionary among the natives. Here he met with an adventure which brought him back to the United States, up to a northern city. You must remind me to tell of that adventure another time.

"After he left Minnesota, he rambled through the northwestern states a while until, urged by a lack of money, he made his way into northern Canada, which was in the hot flush of a rush for oil. There he fell in with the Mounted Police. . . ."

The young man paused, and a thoughtful smile lighted his face—as one smiles who remembers a good thing.

"The Royal Northwest Mounted Police," he said, "you must have heard of them. The quiet determination of this Force which worked, lonely, against tremendous odds and seldom failed, appealed to him. He decided that to work with the Force must be a very great adventure indeed, and since the various experiences he had undergone rather fitted him for the work, he found a place among them.



"He had many fine adventures, and he served with splendid comrades, but this story deals with the last adventure of them all. An adventure which revealed to him something better than the Force—a finer duty, which was better than all adventure. It led him to leave the Police—I am afraid forever."

The young man's voice was low, and again he smiled.

"One winter Carling was stationed at Peace River Crossing, which in those days was scarcely more than a Police Post. News came that an Indian horse thief, for whom the Police had scoured the American border in vain, had fled to the Clear Hills in the North where he sought refuge in the forbidding solitude of wintertime in the barrens. Carling was given the duty of plunging blindly into the wilderness and fetching this miscreant out. It was all in a day's work to the Mounted Police, and Carling set out with a team of dogs, and an Indian driver to comb the Indian villages until he found his man. It might take a week, it might take all winter; Carling would get his man.

"You know I can't tell you fellows of what the North in wintertime is like. I can't tell you of the feeling which grips a man's heart and tells him to hold back, as he stands facing the ghostly barrens which stretch far and away to the horizon. That leaden horizon has concealed death in agony, blindness, and raving lunacy for many men who have plunged into it as Jimmy Carling did that winter, strong and filled with



## THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

---

the pleasure which is given men in their strength. Stedman was a stronger man than Carling, and yet Stedman came out of it broken and shattered. That is another story which you must remind me to tell you. And there was Fitzherbert who set out with an entire patrol— The gray horizon of the North in wintertime hides a pretty bitter sort of life, and a very rotten, lonely death—if a man fails.

“When Carling set out the sky was particularly dirty in the North, and it promised bad weather. He made in a northwesterly direction, and got news of his man sooner than he had expected. A party of trappers told him that Thunder Bear, the Indian whom he sought, was in a winter village on the head waters of the Battle River. This meant a trek of over one hundred and thirty miles into the teeth of the north wind, with a blizzard threatening, and the thermometer fifty-one degrees below zero. Carling turned his sledge to the pole, and in a morning all black before the dawn, he started out.

“With fair weather, and a good trail, the journey should have taken him a little less than four days, for men and dogs in good condition travel swiftly over the snow trail. But the first day’s journey was slow and laborious; the snow had only a thin crust in spite of the bitter cold, and the men and the sledges broke through. Only twenty miles were covered the first day—Carling should have taken more dogs—



"You see he had planned to make straight for a settlement called Vermilion high up on the Peace River, but when he got news of his man he decided to lose no time in running him down, so he set out immediately for his objective.

"The second day Carling had scarcely got to the foothills of the Clear Range when the blizzard broke upon him. Fortunately he had reached a hilly country, and the range which lay to the northwest protected him a little. It was impossible to continue the journey in the face of the storm which raged. The blizzard would have given short shrift to any human being in its path. So Carling and his Indian built a dugout in a hollow under a hill, and lay there to let the blizzard pass.

"Two days of this. They stayed in the dugout two days. On the second day Carling and his Indian pushed through the snow which packed heavily about their shelter and found the weather clear under a sullen sky. And after their eyes had become accustomed to the dazzling whiteness of the world they discerned something more. At a distance of a rod or so the stumbling, flapping apparition of a man. A dwarfed and stunted figure which bulged ridiculously with the furs it wore, and bent its humped back forward as though it bore a burden.

"The uncouth figure stumbled about for a moment with its arms waving wildly in the air; then suddenly,



like a rag doll, it collapsed. Carling dived into the dugout for his snowshoes, and when he emerged again the figure had risen to its feet and was off at a new tangent from which it veered drunkenly with its head tipped up to the sky and its arms groping and fighting in the air.

“‘Snow blind!’ said Carling shortly, and he set out to head the figure off.

“As he loped forward the figure again collapsed, and on the snow it strove with infinite pathos and futility to regain its feet once more; but the North had trapped its victim. The snow gave way treacherously as the fallen human being pressed against it. Its baffling substance sapped the feeble strength, and tore at the victim’s heart. He lay still.

Carling reached the fallen figure, and picked it up as though it was the figure of a boy. He bore it into the dugout, and tearing back the furs and rough woolens which swathed the figure, he reached to feel the heart. The head fell back as he removed the hood, and the candle which the Indian held revealed it as the face of a boy indeed; the copper-colored features of an Indian boy about sixteen years of age.

“With a great deal of rubbing and punching, with heavy blows of the open palm, and with strong liquor, they brought the youngster back to life. But not to vision, for the snow had made him blind. Carling, knowing the pain which light would cause the boy in



his affliction, bound a handkerchief over his eyes before he regained consciousness.

"For a moment the resuscitated boy lay still, relaxed as savages will relax to regain strength in time of stress. A good thing that, by the way, for you fellows to remember—in time of stress, relax. The clever fighter, when he is knocked down, stays down, regathering his forces till the ninth count. So did the Indian boy.

"Then suddenly he arose and stood as straight as a pine in one quick move. He stood alert, and tried to sense the men he could not see.

" 'Kesinamis is near death,' he said eagerly, speaking straight to the open air. 'You will return with me, redcoat? Kesinamis is near death. It is my mother.'

" 'How do you know I am a redcoat?' asked Carling.

" 'The skins of the redcoat speak when he moves,' replied the Indian lad. 'The skins which he wears are hard skins.' The savage's quick ear had caught the almost inaudible creak of Carling's leather belt and accoutrement.

" 'You say that your mother is ill, sick—that she is dying?' asked Carling, and gently he pulled the boy back upon the bed of fir branches.

" 'Dying,' said the lad, struggling feebly. 'We must go now. It is my mother.'

" 'The snow has made you blind,' said Carling.



## THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

---

'And you have little strength. We will wait here until you can see once more.'

"But the boy would not have that. He had plunged into the barrens to seek aid, and no one knows how long he had traveled with his scanty pack through the blizzard. Now, although he was blind and exhausted, he had only one thought: he must start Carling on the back trail to save his mother's life, and that done he cared little if he dropped by the track himself.

" 'Kisanis wants no eyes to see Kesinamis when she is dead,' he cried. 'The redcoat will come back the trail with Kisanis. He will make Kesinamis well. It is my mother.'

"The young voice striving for words—for the Indian boy knew very few—was far more piteous than the eyes of a dumb, suffering animal. The eager, helpless repetition tore at Carling's heart; but he was after a man—Thunder Bear.

" 'The redcoat goes on a long journey,' explained Carling. 'His duty will take him three—four days. He will leave Kisanis here with Pook (Pook was the name of Carling's Indian). When he returns you will be strong and see once more. Then we will go back to Kesinamis.'

"At this the boy put his arms over his eyes, as a man does who is suffering, for deeper than the pain of his blindness was the burning thought that Kesinamis



might even now be dying. Once more he stood suddenly erect.

“‘Let the redcoat go on!’ he cried with a sob in his voice. ‘Pook go with him. Kisanis must make the redcoat’s lodge alone! Kesinamis is near death,’ he wailed. ‘It is my mother.’

Carling rose and started to pull the boy’s furs about his throat and head.

“‘Pook,’ he said, ‘get ready the sledge. We will go with Kisanis.’

“The boy said no word. He threw himself on the bed again. Now he was content. He had great confidence in the redcoat.

“As Pook roused the dogs from their holes in the snow, and began to break camp, Carling put a kettle of water, with tea leaves in it, on the fire to boil; and after all was ready to depart they waited until the steam began to rise. Then Carling took the bandage from the boy’s head, and bade him look into the kettle. Carling guiding him, the lad thrust his eyes down to the steaming opening, and the redcoat covered his head with the handkerchief to let none of the steam escape. This is a cure for snow blindness which pioneers knew before tea was sold in tins, and it is a sure cure.

“Kisanis looked into the kettle until it steamed no more, and after that the pain was gone and he was not so blind. Carling put the handkerchief over his eyes



## THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

---

again, and the three set out to find the stricken Indian woman.

"They made northwest under the Indian lad's direction, aiming for Musgus Portage, over the Musgus Hills; and because the blizzard had made a good trail for them, and the wind had changed to the northeast, their drive was an easy one. With Kisanis on the sledge, they won to the Portage in less than two days.

"Repeated treatments of the great tea cure in the shelter of a trapper's cabin on the trail had given Kisanis back his sight, and good food, with rest, had him running with the dogs before the portage had been left a day's journey behind them. So he led the party, pacing the leaders of the team indefatigably, and they made good time.

"In a copse of sheltering fir trees on the bank of a little stream, they came upon an Indian encampment.

"'It is the lodge of Thunder Bear,' said Kisanis, with something akin to a catch in his voice.

"'Thunder Bear!' cried Carling. This was the man he was hunting!

"'My father,' said the boy. 'He will not be here, Thunder Bear has watched for the redcoat since Kisanis went to find him.'

"He said no more, but pushed on at a feverish pace. He was filled now with fear for his mother. I watched him as we approached. I watched his young face with



the fear in his eyes, and God knows I feared as well—— Kisanis—Young Old Man—sick with fear for the woman, his mother, whom he loved better than his life.”

“*You* watched him!” said Alan, catching his breath.

“Fearful of losing his mother,” said Renfrew.

“Coming home. Lord, what a home to come to!”

“We made for the door of the Indian cabin—Carling made for the door, and the Indian boy——”

Renfrew gazed for a moment into Alan’s eyes.

“Pook hung back,” he said.

“The Indian hung back, staring dreadfully at a mound, covered with snow which lay before him. He made an exclamation, and Carling and Kisanis turned about, and they saw the covered mound. Carling moved toward it, but the life went out of the boy’s face, and he stood as rigid as a totem.

“Carling knelt, and started delving in the snow which covered the mound, and as he raked it away in great armfuls, the boy, Kisanis, began to chant in a plaintive sing-song:

“‘Kesinamis is dead. Kesinamis, my mother. Kesinamis, the White Otter woman. She is dead. She has gone to a spirit place. Kesinamis, my mother!’ he chanted.

“He chanted on, standing rigidly looking into the vacant air. Desolate, distracted—a forlorn Indian boy—and all the while Carling delved into the snow with



## THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

---

the pitiful dirge tearing at his heart and fearing what he might uncover.

"Finally he reached the hidden corpse. Wolves had been at it, and it was a hideous, unbeautiful thing. It was not the corpse of Kesinamis. It was the body of a man—Thunder Bear, dead where he had fallen; dead of diphtheria.

"The air in the cabin was very foul, having been sealed within the cabin for several days. The fire had long since gone out, and the ghastly stillness of the stale air, more piercing than the coldest outdoor weather, reached Carling's very marrow.

"It astonished Carling that the Indian woman remained alive. No disease would have been necessary to kill a white woman after three days in such an atmosphere.

"He ventilated the hut, built a fire, and treated the woman as best he could, painting her throat with iodine and ministering to her from his scanty medicine chest. He then fed her a mess of condensed milk and water which was the only invalid food he had. Doubtless the heavy coverings in which she was swathed, keeping the pores of her body open, had helped her fight the illness. Whatever virtue it was which had assisted her, it had stood her in good stead, for indomitably she held the evil at arm's length.

"Then Carling, with the two Indians, set about building another cabin. In two days they had erected a



cozy shelter, and to this fresher chamber they moved Kesinamis.

“There followed long days of fighting for the life of the Indian woman, and when despair of winning the unequal contest crept into Carling’s heart, a look at the Indian boy, living every hour at the door of his mother’s cabin, sufficed to urge him to a sterner resolution.

“Often they prayed, and there were long black nights of nursing. In the North, in the bitter winter—

“It is difficult for me to go on with this story now. To describe the love of a savage boy for his mother; to describe the devotion which burned always in his eyes, and was betrayed in the music of his voice when he spoke to her, is very difficult.

“Carling, when he was a boy, had lived in very much the same way as you fellows live. His mother had been to him a gentle influence which he had accepted as granted, and he had loved her; and when he had been ill or in any trouble, he had felt mightily glad and thankful to have her with him. Whenever trouble, illness, or unhappiness had come to her, the matter had always been taken completely out of his hands by grown folk.

“Now something began to move in Carling’s heart which troubled him. A little painful worm of unknown kind was eating at his spirit, and vaguely he felt ashamed.



## THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

---

"Kesinamis grew better; her throat became more clear. She could now see her son and know him, and the boy's place became immovable at her bedside. Carling, seeing them together, felt more ashamed, and he could not tell why.

"One night, rolled in his sleeping bag but sleepless, Carling found out what the little worm was which troubled him. It was self-reproach, relentless, and very bitter. A clear light seemed to shine in upon him, so that he could see within his breast, and he saw for the first time that he had run away.

"'Kisanis must make the redcoat's lodge alone,' the blind and exhausted Indian boy had said. 'Kesinamis is near death. It is my mother!'

"And what of Carling's mother?

"As her hair grew white, and as her youth left her, Carling had run away—he had run away from her side and from the quiet of her home to follow his life of splendid adventure. How if she were ill? Near death? Carling could not know. It had been months since he had heard from her. Mails travel slowly in the North. His mother!

"There had been a time before his father died when she had had to work—work hard to clothe and feed him; and sometimes he had sent home for money!

"Bitterly the little worm ate into his heart, and he flushed painfully, groaning into his blanket. He, the white man—the 'superior race'—and Kisanis, blind



and exhausted, had said 'I must make the redcoat's lodge alone.'

"He arose and put on his snowshoes and stumbled out over the snow into the night. Then he stood still, stock still under the flashing northern lights. And he stayed there, under the lights, till morning.

"When morning came, and the smell of burning wood came over the snow to remind him of his companions, Carling made his way back to the camp again. He was stiff with the cold, and he set to chopping wood vigorously to restore his circulation; but he saw Kisanis disappear into the hut, burdened with some article for the invalid, and the determination which had come to him in the night rang in his ears with the sound of the axe, as though the voice in his breast spoke aloud.

"He must leave the Police! Buy himself out! Buy himself out! And go back to the responsibility he had shirked! He must build his mother a home, and shelter her, and care for her. He must give her everything she most desired. Every smallest thing to make her happy!

"But how? said his mind, as the flashing ax rang on the wood.

"His savings would not pay for his release from the Police, would certainly not build the home which had come into his mind as a thing of urgent importance.

"Suddenly, as ideas always come, the idea came to him. People wrote stories about the sort of thing he



## THE MAN FROM THE NORTH

---

had been doing ever since he left home. Often the stories were poor things with very little truth about them, but people read them, and it occurred to him that they must pay for them as well. Surely, thought he, if he could convey on paper anything of the devotion of this Indian boy, anything of the urgent suffering in his voice that day in the dugout, people would pay for that.

“So he wrote, using his pencil stub and the pages of his notebook. He wrote far into the winter nights, in the sick room, by candle light. His fingers were often numb with the cold so that there was little feeling in them, and he could scarcely read the staggering scrawl which resulted. He wrote and wrote feverishly, always with the burning eyes of Kisanis before him and the boy’s voice chanting in his ear. The whole, vast, bitter spirit of the North went into that story, I believe; and it was from no worth of his, but because the little worm ate into his heart, and the gift was given him to write.

“Later, when together, the four came down from the North, he typed that story, and very readily the people bought it. Not only that one did they buy, but from eastern, civilized places came a long call for more.

“He wrote more, and his fortune grew with the fame they brought him. Lord! It sounds like a rotten novel! But he gained his heart’s desire, you know. He built the home which he knew he did not deserve.”



## RENFREW OF THE ROYAL MOUNTED

---

Renfrew's voice dropped a little, became a little reverent.

"Yet there was one who deserved the happiness his fortune brought her," he said.

"Carling was the instrument. . . .

Alan spoke first among the silent boys.

"Is that the house?" he asked, pointing to the house of mystery.

Renfrew nodded.

"The war came on after I came down from the North, but it only interrupted, it did not kill the dream."

The young man seemed very happy. His eyes lit up as he caught the eyes of the circle of boys. They smiled back at him.

"Of course," he said, "you fellows know now. I'm keeping my presence here rather quiet. I'm at work on a book, and if the town knows who I am I'll have no rest. They want a fellow to mix so. Ask him out a lot, you know. Just know me quietly until that book is finished, and come back a lot. Prepare to stay next time and we'll have stories till the moon is high."

And before the boys went on their way they promised him that.



## CHAPTER II

### CHASING GHOSTS

SMALL incidents breed the idea, and from ideas all great adventure is sprung.

Who can tell what casual incident first planted the seed in the mind of Columbus which made the world seem round? Or what sage can inform us of the crack of circumstance which showed Cæsar the light which led him to Britain? Once a man went up in a balloon and proved to the world that men could fly, but no one has said what bred the idea. It was an incident; the same sort of incident which befell another young man and showed him that baffled steam would blow the lid off a kettle.

So it was that a story, a mere ghost story, to pass a spring evening bore fruit in an idea, and the idea led to a great adventure.

The boys that night sat about a fire built in the hollow of a gravel pit which was dug in the side of the river bank. Dusk fell late on these spring evenings and the leaflets which decked the trees showed vividly emer-



ald while the shadows of deep purple slowly enveloped them. It was a still, windless evening as the boys sat about their fire in Pin Factory Cut (for this quiet section of the river had been named after the abandoned business venture which had left the gaunt, blind brick house standing by the decaying dam).

"He will come soon," said Bub Currie, as the shadows deepened and the flame of the fire became more distinct.

"Seven o'clock," announced Billy Loomis.

"Maybe something came up to keep him," suggested Bub; and listening to the splashing of the water as it overran the old dam, he added, "Gee! the old factory looks spooky, doesn't it?"

"Looks like a haunted house," said Dick Rose, his dark eyes snapping in the firelight.

"Listen!" somebody cried. From out of sight and further up the river bank a voice with more volume to commend it than quality was singing:

"O Mrs. Shady, she was a lady,  
She had a daughter whom I adore.  
I used to court her (I mean the daughter),  
Every Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday,  
Sunday afternoon at half-past four!"

"Wow!" yelled Howard Hough, approving of the remarkable anthem.



"Alan! that voice!" cried Billy Loomis dramatically.

As one, the group of boys voiced their approval; but not for long. The resounding, cheery voice of a vigorous young man came to them from the unknown location of the approaching singer.

"Fine!" cried the voice. "Second verse!" and it joined with the singer.

"O Mrs. Shady, she was a lady,  
She had a daughter whom I adore.  
I used to court her (I mean the daughter),  
Every Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday,  
Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thurs-  
day, Friday, Saturday,  
Sunday afternoon at *half-past four!*"

Nearer the approaching voices came, bearing their song with them. As the last line was booming out over the still countryside, Alan came hurtling down the gravel bank and barely stopped short of the fire. Renfrew swung in along the riverside, moving with an easy woodman's stride which caused him to loom into sight from the dusk as a ship looms up through the mist.

"And now, gentlemen," cried Renfrew, his eyes twinkling mischievously, "the fifteenth and last verse!"

Many voices in many keys swelled the chorus which followed.



“O Mrs. Shady, she was a lady,  
She had a daughter whom I adore.  
I used to court her (I mean the daughter),  
Every Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday——”

The unfortunate Mrs. Shady and her even less happy daughter were saved from fifteen weeks of this by the complete inability of the ardent suitors to stand, or rather sing, together. It ended in pandemonium.

The effort over, all concerned collapsed by the fire, and consumed an entire box of slippery elm cough drops before Bub, to whom they belonged, could get the box back again.

Only Renfrew stood erect throwing a long shadow against the gravel bank and watching the moon which had not yet risen into their sight throw ghostly lights on the deserted factory across the river.

“Well, fellows,” he said, “I told you I’d meet you here to-night for a story. What sort of a story shall it be? I warn you I don’t feel hideously serious to-night.”

There came a rush of urgent suggestions. For the most part the spell of the still black weir and the blind, deserted building beyond lay upon the boys heavily, and a ghost story was the cry of the majority.

“But I have never seen a ghost,” protested Renfrew.  
“They have never palled with me particularly. A very



exclusive herd, ghosts are. They feel that I eat too much, I believe. Not enough green apple pie, though. Ghosts are strong for people who eat green apple pie in quantity."

"This would be a great night for ghosts though, wouldn't it?" said Dick Rose lucidly. "Look at that moonlight on the Pin Factory! It makes it look dead."

"What a night!" suddenly said Renfrew. "And a dandy place for a fire, too!"

"But you said you'd tell us a story!" accused Eddie Adams.

"It reminds me of a night in Saskatchewan," said Renfrew.

"A ghost story," urged Bub Currie.

"If you interrupt me again, young feller," said Renfrew, easily, "you'll be made into a little exclusive ghost all along of yourself."

"You said it reminded you of a night in Hoboken," urged Dick Rose.

"Saskatchewan," corrected Renfrew. "It is a story of a haunted house."

"Wow!" said Bub.

"Shut up!" warned Dick.

"Shut up yourself!" suggested Bub.

"In Saskatchewan!" said Renfrew, and a silence fell about the camp fire. "It was up in the Cypress Hills



country that I met with this adventure," said Renfrew. "I was riding from Regina to Fort Walsh."

"Embry, the farmer, first put me on the scent of the trouble, and it's a funny thing when you look back on it that before I ran across Embry on his farm outside Airelyn I met Corporal Woodcott and Ginger in the Fort Walsh Road, and parted with them. I had seen their scarlet tunics from a distance and I rode hard all morning to catch up with them. And when I overtook them, Woodcott gazed through me as though I was thin air. 'Cheero,' he said, without a note of warmth in his voice, and Ginger gazed at me stolidly, merely watching.

"This, I afterward found out, was the way of Woodcott, and Ginger was suffering from liver trouble.

"Woodcott was the sort of Englishman you always see pictured in funny riding breeches and a monocle. He didn't wear a monocle and his breeches were regulation police blue with the yellow stripe. But he'd had his whole outfit retailored and he looked as if he'd stepped out of a pretty picture. He always spoke with an affected drawl as if it hurt him to speak, and his language was that of the comic Englishman in the plays. He was good-looking and tall, but his expression of mild contempt made your fingers itch for a custard pie. He was useful among the Indians, who admired his calm, superior air; but among white men he raised too much trouble. So he was stationed chiefly among Indians.



"Ginger was big, too, and, remarkable enough, he was red-headed. He was very sullen; you see his liver troubled him.

"I rode with those two men in utter silence for two hours, then having found out that they were bound for Fort Walsh I decided that I was bound for Airelyn and parted with them at a crossroad. It was funny, because, if I had stayed with those two, things could not have happened as they did.

"Two miles along the road to Airelyn I came upon the Embry homestead and a bright sort of boy in overalls ran in to tell his dad about me. This boy was Arthur Embry, aged fifteen, and I was to see a lot of him. See him much too often, as a matter of fact. Embry came out from behind the house, and, after putting my horse up for me, he took me about his farm, telling me all about it. I stayed to dinner with him, and after dinner went into his sitting room and we smoked together. He said he had something of a serious nature to talk over with me, and on my inviting his confidence he informed me mysteriously enough that it was about the 'old Tucker House.'

" 'There's something amiss there,' he said. 'It's been deserted and falling apart for six years now, and yet people see lights in it sometimes, and those who dare go near it on a dark night talk of strange figures and queer sounds. The boys think it's haunted and won't go near it for a cool thousand. Some of us have visited



it (in the daylight), but we found no sign of visitors. It seems to me something queer, whisky smuggling or something, is being hatched there. But there's no man for miles around who I'd suspect of such a plot.'

" 'Well?' I suggested.

" 'I thought perhaps it might interest you,' he said. 'I think it ought to be investigated, and you, you're a trained observer, you know. I thought you might find some clue or evidence we have missed. We could go over this afternoon.'

" 'When does the ghost walk?' I said; and I almost called him Watson.

" 'Not often,' he replied. 'People see it, or hear it, or something about once or twice a month. Always, of course, at night. Studdly's wife saw a light there about two weeks ago.'

" 'Then we'll visit the old house to-night!' I said.

" 'His face fell a little. 'Why not this afternoon?' he suggested. He was not a fighting man.

" 'Afraid of ghosts?' I asked, then quickly added, 'We'd stand a better chance of getting to the bottom of things at night!' So it was arranged that we would make our investigation that night.

" 'We talked the matter over, and he told me more about the Tucker House and its history. While he sat nervously cleaning a mighty revolver which might well have blown up the ancient shell we planned to visit, and I read him a lecture about the danger of using fire



arms hastily, a horseman rode up to the fence outside and hailed Embry cheerily. Embry went out and returned almost immediately with Constable Chester West R.N.W.M.P. to whom he introduced me. Chet West was a tall, black-haired, black-browed Cornish man who had attained the fullest glory of manhood without ever leaving his boyhood behind. We quickly became friends, and after I had explained my own position, and the adventure we had planned for the night, he took command of the party, since this was his regular patrol and the peace of the countryside was in his keeping.

"We spent the afternoon about the farm, West explaining to me the custom and methods of the cattlemen in his district. Also he told me of the famous Charcoal case with which he had been connected. A queer story which you must hear some day. We were in the barn when an extremely small boy galloped into the yard, bareback, on a wiry pony, and spoke excitedly with Mr. Embry. Embry came in and told us that this was Billy Hamilton come to tell him that Arthur was five miles away spending the afternoon with the Hamilton boys, and could he stay to supper. We decided that this was an excellent way to leave us a clear deck for the night, so Billy was bidden tell Arthur that he could stay for supper and spend the night if he liked, and away bounded Billy with his message.

"The three of us supped together and I found my-



self more and more attached to Chet West as the evening passed and I came to know him better. Then at about eight-thirty we set out, three abreast, for the scene of our adventure.

"It was a night of brilliant moonlight; so brilliant, indeed, that the effect of the illumination was defeated by the elusive shadows which it cast. Thus a tree on the side which faced the moonlight was nearly invisible since the strong light made it one with the fields behind it. On the shadow side, however, the gaunt, distorted image which it cast made it seem all out of shape and wildly disproportioned.

"We rode three abreast along the road bathed in this queer moonlight, and as we alternately threw back shadows across one another or well nigh dissolved into the surrounding scene, according to our oft-changed positions and the winding of the road, we each seemed to have something ghostly about us, and it made the journey an eerie one.

"Embry rode nervously, and he frequently felt of his mammoth revolver as though to reassure himself by the knowledge that he had it. Noticing this, I repeated my warning of the afternoon. A man unaccustomed to firearms uses them too hastily.

"As we came to the brow of a hill, Embry drew us to a halt.

"'It's down in the valley beyond,' he said. 'If we



ride to the brow of the hill we will be seen in silhouette.'

"So we rode back onto the prairie and passed over the hilltop among dwarfed oak trees which were black under the moonlight. The hilltop crossed, we rejoined the road again, for the moon was low and the road was shadowed. It fell away before us in a long slope and far below, about a mile away, I should think, it wound down and disappeared into a funnel-shaped patch of deep black brush, which stood out like a stain on the silver-gold prairie land.

" 'That's a ravine, where that brush is,' said Embry. 'The road runs through it. If you look hard you can see the old Tucker House on the left-hand side of the road just this side of the brush.'

"For my part I strained my eyes, trying to make out the house; but its outlines were lost in the black clump of brush beyond. We all sat in our saddles on the hillside peering into the night, when suddenly with all the magic of an action done far away by a person unseen, a light appeared. And by that square of light seen through a window the house took shape before us all.

" 'There's the light!' whispered Embry hoarsely. 'There's something there!'

" 'How many doors to the house?' asked West coolly.

" 'There's a front door and a back door,' replied Embry, with his eyes glued on the flickering light. 'I think there's a cellar entrance on the far side, too.'



“West did some quick thinking. ‘Right-o!’ he said. ‘You and I will ride well apart down the open on this side of the road. I don’t think they’ll see us unless the moon comes up over the hill behind. I’ll leave you this side of the house at the left-hand corner where you can watch the windows on the side and the back door. You ride down the right side of the road, Renfrew; make a detour through the brush and approach the house to your extreme right. From there you can cover the cellar door and back door, too. When you fellows are in position give me an owl call. It’s easy. Like this! (He gave a correct imitation of an owl inquiring as to some one’s identity). Then I’ll go in the front door and interview Mr. Firefly. All set?’

“After Embry had practiced the owl language for a little and had got his pronoun perfect, we were all set; and obedient to orders I set my mount off the road and cantered down the hill over the soft prairie land on my mission.

“Having skirted the brush along the far edge of the ravine, I dismounted and led my horse, through the bushes and stunted trees, across the road and thence through the brush till I came abruptly to the clearing and there across a rod or two of open land lay the haunted house, gaunt and gray, a weird silhouette against the moon with the eerie light flickering in an upstairs inner room. Just as I came to the clearing I heard a sound which suggested a cow which had just



lost its favorite calf. This sound came from the other side of the house, and I knew it was Embry, all excited, trying to imitate an owl. I was afraid this noise would give the alarm so I halted only long enough to make my horse fast in the brush and mark its position before I ventured forth. The house was long, and I turned to walk toward the rear. As I did so, I fancied I caught a movement of some elusive shadow at the edge of the brush. I hesitated to look again, but deciding that it was a freak of the moonlight on the stunted trees, I made haste to assume my position. Once there I gave the signal, noting as I did so that the light still flickered. The intruders had not yet taken alarm.

“My call given, I waited for a space, conscious of the stillness of the night and of the sinister suggestion of that flickering light. West was entering now at the front, and I would have given a lot to be with him. What if he were fired on! I found myself tensely awaiting the shot, my hand on my pistol butt. Then things began to happen.

“Far off to my right a horse whinnied, and I turned to investigate. As though on wings, a silvery shadow of horse and rider was darting away from the brush. I made for my own horse, and swinging into the saddle gave chase.

“Vaguely the horseman appeared and disappeared as he crossed and recrossed the moonlight before me. He



headed for the road, and leaning far over my horse's neck I rode to cut him off. He dodged, riding for the open prairie, and I rounded on him, urging him toward the brush. Once he was headed that way, I turned my more speedy horse to cut him off and so, at a mad gallop, I came up beside him and seized his bridle rein. Prancing, we came to a halt, and face to face. He was in the full stream of the moonlight, and I recognized him at once. It was the open, guileless face of the boy, Arthur Embry!

"'Gosh! Mr. Renfrew, you gave me an awful scare,' he said. 'I thought you were one of them.' And he motioned toward the gaunt house which, from this side, was gray-green in the full light of the moon.

"'Arthur!' I cried, and I felt a good bit cold with the thought that West might need me even now. 'What are you doing here?'

"'I came back and found you all gone,' the boy replied. 'So I came on here.'

"'Come!' I said. And together we rode toward the house once more. The light still burned in the window, and I pictured West keeping a still watch upon the ghostly inhabitant from some black corner, while he awaited our assistance. I felt eager to hurry back, but I was loath to risk a betrayal of my coming by the beating of hoofs. Then suddenly the light flickered, vanished, reappeared, and went out as though strug-



gling men had extinguished it. Careless of horse then, I galloped up to the house.

“‘Stay outside!’ I ordered Arthur, as I leaped from my horse at the point where Embry should have been, and confident that I would find him with West engaged in heaven knows what business within, I vaulted in at the nearest windowless casement. As I stumbled to my feet inside, the front door opened with a mighty crash which reverberated through the empty shell, and in the moonlight I made out West.

“‘Renfrew!’ he said in a whisper. ‘I thought you were off chasing ghosts.’ He had been unable to get in the front door, and reconnoitering for a window which would give him easy entrance, he saw me go off on my chase. Whereupon he stayed outside and kept watch from across the road on that light, knowing it to be evidence of the intruder’s presence. When the light disappeared he forced the door, and found me there. This he told me in whispers. We had no flashlight, but we each possessed a dark lantern, and with the aid of these we found the stairs. Smelling vilely of rats and decay, the old house creaked and groaned, and the stairs, broken and rickety, seemed to cry out as we ascended them. We made the top, however, without seeming to have caused a stir, and once there West made for the room from which it seemed the light had come, while I guarded the stairs. Soon he returned. ‘No one there!’ he reported.



"You know we examined every niche of that infernal house, becoming more careless of exposure and of the noise we made, as we went from room to broken, desolate room. The house was bare, desolated, and empty. Yet no one had been seen to leave it. Finally in a front room we found a piece of board with a mess of candle grease on it. We examined it by the light of our lanterns.

" 'This explains it,' West said. 'The candle was not blown out, as we thought, it burned itself out. They left it behind without extinguishing it. A good trick. This house was empty when we first arrived.'

" 'But who are they?' I cried. 'What do they do here?' Together we searched the house, but in the elusive light of the moon and the insufficient glow of our lanterns we found no clue to the mystery.

" 'We must examine it by daylight,' said West. And with that poor solace we turned out once more, mounted our horses, and struck the road toward Embry's farm. Both Embry and the boy had disappeared, and I concluded that the rancher, who felt nervous of this man-hunting business, had found his son, and taken him home to bed.

"We had proceeded but a little distance up the hill, when West suddenly reined in. 'Listen!' he whispered.

"Well in front of us was the unmistakable sound of many hoof beats. A party of horsemen was riding in



front of us, and peering ahead we could see the vague movement of the mass on the hillside.

“‘We’ll ride round over the prairie and cut them off,’ West whispered. So we urged our mounts up the embankment and were soon riding cross-country, cutting off a bend in the road. As we cantered along my eye caught a shadow out on the prairie far to our right which seemed to skim along in a course parallel to our own. I called West’s attention to this. ‘Go get him!’ he said. ‘I’ll shadow these fellows.’

So once more I found myself galloping over the soft soil, cutting off another eerie, ghostlike figure. I found it easier to ride this man down, for he urged his horse across me in a straight line for the road.

“I gained so swiftly on him that, too late, he swerved but, before I had his bridle in my hand, we were far from the point where I had left West.

“‘If this is young Arthur again,’ I said to myself, ‘I shall spank him.’

“But it wasn’t Arthur. It was his father, his face haggard with fear. He, too, had thought his pursuer was evil, and in panic had even forgotten the youthful cannon which he carried.

“After a brief explanation, in which I found that I had interrupted his journey home, we rode back to the road, but could find no sign of West. I felt a little anxious lest he had tackled our party of horsemen single-handed, but I reasoned that nothing serious could



have happened without any noise betraying it. Then Embry plucked me by the sleeve. I turned and found him pointing down the hill. *And there was a light in the window of the old house!*

It was a flashing light which appeared and disappeared. Suddenly it glared into my eyes, and I knew it was a powerful electric flash. I told Embry this. 'Has Arthur got one?' I asked, remembering the boy. He shook his head, surprised at my question. 'Don't think there's a thing like that this side of Swift Current,' he said.

" 'They're back again! Come on!' I answered, turning downhill.

" 'We'd better get West,' he said. But I was already on my way, and he valiantly fought down his reluctance and followed me.

"We dismounted under the bank of the road, and left our horses there in the black shadow. I wanted to get there before the intruders escaped, so we made all the haste we could; but as we moved I noticed that Embry transferred his cumbersome weapon to his coat pocket.

"We entered the house by the broken front door, he following closely on my heels, pressing against me. I didn't want to show my light—it would make too fine a target. We moved slowly in, and stood, hearing our hearts beat in the narrow hall. With every nerve alert, we waited and soon we heard a sound. It was the



## CHASING GHOSTS

---

sound of a foot carefully placed upon an ill-chosen board. The sound came from upstairs. I loosed the holster of my pistol, and slowly ascended the stairs, knowing every step. I crept up noiselessly, and Embry crawled behind me. Once at the stairhead we strained our nerves once more to hear a telltale sound. It came in a sudden whisper. 'Some one in the house,' I heard the whisper say, and it came from a room at the back. We slid toward the rear, along the balusters, striving desperately to make no noise and to avoid a streak of moonlight which entered through a little high window and betrayed a door into the room we sought. Here, at the back of the hall, I placed my lips close to Embry's ear, and conveyed to him rather than whispered an order to remain there; then I moved inch by inch toward the door. Inch by inch I moved forward until I found myself with nerves a-tingle inside the room. I found it illuminated fairly well by moonlight streaming in through two windows. It was light in the room, and there was no man there!

"Standing flat against the wall in a black shadow, I examined the room with my nerves probing every corner of the rotten old house. I soon made out a door evidently connecting this room with the front one in which we had found the candle. I decided that our men must at that very minute be in that front room. Had only West been my companion I could have depended upon him to hold the stairs. I decided that as



it was I must take a chance with Embry and began to move slowly to the connecting door. Then suddenly the ghostly game was brought to a showdown. Embry over the stair wall, dislodged some rotten piece of wood, and it fell to the bottom of the stairs with a shocking crash. There was an exclamation in the next room and several men rushed out recklessly, and one went crashing down the stairs, the noise of his footsteps grinding through the rotten wood and rending the air like thunderclaps in the empty house. Then the door of my room was thrown open and Embry dashed across the shadow into the moonlight: 'Renfrew! where are you?' he cried. 'They've found me out.' And so they had. An exclamation called the man back who had rushed downstairs and I heard the gang coming up the hall after us. I was very angry at the manner in which Embry had thrown us on the defensive.

"'Quick! Through here!' I cried, and ran over to the connecting door, but it would not open! Then they came to the blackness of the other door where they could see our forms in the vague moonlight. Embry stood in front of me clutching his weapon like a wolf at bay, and as the other door was thrown open, he fired, filling the house with a fearful noise. I snatched the gun from him and a voice spoke from the blackness, 'Blithering idiot!' said the voice. 'Hands up!' ordered another, and they had us helpless, silhouetted before them. Then the first voice spoke with the tone of an



invalid trying to make conversation with a dear old lady visitor. 'Oh, Gingah,' it said, 'are you hurt?' 'No,' growled the answer. 'I'm so glad,' drawled the first voice. 'You know, I hate this sort of thing.'

"The voice was unmistakable.

" 'Woodcott!' I cried. And he flashed his electric torch as I flashed my dark lantern. There in the doorway stood Woodcott and Ginger with the figure of a ranchman.

" 'My word!' said Woodcott. 'It's Renfrew.' And he spoke with precisely the same enthusiasm as might mark the utterance of a grocer's clerk, tired of his job, upon the discovery of a sack of beans.

"As we rode back to Embry's farm we provided one another with explanations. We could not very well ride five abreast so we grouped, changing places as we chose to talk together and shouting backward and forward as we desired to speak to some one before or behind. So we got our information in scraps of conversation.

" 'His name's Hamilton,' explained Woodcott to me, referring to the ranchman who accompanied him. 'We came to his place about four miles up the road after we left you. So sorry you couldn't go on with us, old fellah. I'm afraid we were putrid company. It's Gingah; his livah's out of whack.'

" 'Hamilton told us about the Tucker place,' said



Ginger. 'And we set out for it to-night. Must have arrived after you and West left.'

"'That's why I sent Dick and Wally over to sleep with Arthur,' Hamilton shouted back to Embry. 'Wanted 'em out of the way.'

"Embry rode up beside Hamilton, and I know that he was explaining that Arthur was supposed to have spent the night at Hamilton's place. So I rode up and joined them to tell Embry for the first time how I had ridden Arthur down.

"'What the devil is it all about?' cried Hamilton. 'Who's the filthy herd who use the Tucker house? I'll swear our boys have nothing to do with them.'

"'And where can West have got to?' cried Embry. Which question worried me not a little as well. So we urged our horses forward, feeling that all our delinquent friends would be awaiting us. But on our arrival no sign or sound was there. The boy's bed had not been slept in and his pony was gone from the barn. Embry was on the verge of weeping and we all felt the need of sleep. Yet it was obviously impossible for us to retire with the boys unfound and West conceivably a prisoner of the Tucker crowd. It was decided to ride over to the Hamilton place, but first Embry prepared coffee for us and we sat about his fireside drinking it. Peculiarly enough the imperturbable Woodcott was a vast relief to us all at this time. He



took our minds from the fears which haunted them with stories of polo in India.

"He was telling of a nervously intelligent mare he had once ridden, when the door opened and West came in.

"He seemed full of life and vigor as when I had met him in the afternoon. His face showed no fatigue and his eyes sparkled with a boyish mirth. He greeted us all and sundry, then bade us all sit again as, with his eyes still twinkling, he filled a coffee cup.

"Woodcott, who had greeted West without the quiver of an eyelash, subsided into his chair once more.

"‘Her name,’ he said, ‘was Nellie.’ Of course he was talking of the mare, but we stared at him as if he was daft.

"Then we explained all over again for the benefit of West. He listened with great restraint till we had finished, and started showering questions upon him. Where had he been? What did he know? Who were the Tucker gang? Where were the boys? How? Why? What?

"‘Be calm! Be calm!’ he said. ‘I know just who the Tucker gang is. And I know where the boys are, too. They’re not at your place, Hamilton. Now what I want to know is, Are all your horses saddled?’

"They were and we told him so. Then he took us out, and mounting himself, he bade us ride with him.



Obediently we followed him, and when the anxious fathers found he would answer no questions, we all rode silently. The moon had waned now, and the stars paled, as the cold mists rose from the hollows to meet the dawn.

"We rode in a miniature cavalcade back along the road of our adventures till we came to the hilltop. Here West turned from the road and led us off cross-country till we came to a place of rolling hills and sudden landslides which dipped to a shining stream. We followed the ridge along the landslides till we came to a more gentle bank, and here we dropped to the river side and rode until we reached a knoll with stunted oak trees on it. Here on the knoll was the smoldering remains of a camp fire, and a number of figures lay about it rolled in blankets.

"We dismounted at some distance and West bade us surround the sleepers while he aroused them. So we let him go forward and took our places at a distance. As we closed in I noticed that the light of a new day had come upon us so gradually that it seemed sudden, and there was a golden fringe along the eastern horizon. We saw West go forward, and, dropping to one knee, gently arouse one of the sleepers. The awakened one suddenly sat up and we saw it was a tousle-headed boy—quite a youngster. 'Cheese it!' he yelled, trying to scramble to his feet; but West's hand was heavy on his shoulder. At the boy's shrill warning,



seven more tousled heads emerged from their blankets, and blinked at us and at the morning. Then they stared about them, not trying to escape, rather awed by the force surrounding them. And, indeed, we must have appeared an imposing array. Four tall Mounted Policemen with vivid scarlet tunics and the brilliant yellow stripes on their riding breeches, all sparkling in the sunrise and two ominous, able-bodied fathers.

"Embry and Hamilton moved forward as Arthur's head emerged from the blankets, but West motioned them back. He went over to where Arthur sat.

" 'Tell me all about it, Arthur,' he said.

" 'Why, it's the Explorers' Club,' said Arthur guilelessly. 'Us boys have had the club for a year now. We go out together and explore all the trails, and hills, and ravines and woods and rivers—and make maps of 'em. We've always used the Tucker place for meetings. It's a fine, mysterious place. And we sort of liked it when people got scared about the lights and noises and so forth. We went over there to-night—last night; but dad warned us that you people were coming when he mooed like a cow. Mr. Renfrew nearly got us when we made for the brush, but I guess he didn't see us much. Then I'd mixed up everything so, telling dad I was staying at the Hamiltons' and letting Mr. Hamilton think we was staying at our house, we thought probably it would be best to sleep out. So we went back to Hamiltons' and got all the



blankets we wanted. How did you find out where we were?’

“West laughed, a fine, friendly laugh. ‘Mr. Renfrew and I found you fellows just in front of us when you were riding away. I shadowed you here, and then went back and brought our party along. Let’s be getting back to breakfast.’

“So we all rode back like a cavalry division and had the happiest, jolliest breakfast party at the Hamilton farm that I can remember ever attending. The boys weren’t punished—not while we were there, and we four Policemen rode on to Fort Walsh together. I quite got to like Woodcott before we arrived.

“I remarked to him what a splendid adventure it had all been, and he calmly looked through me as he replied,

“‘Perf’ly ripping,’ with all the excitement of an enthusiastic fisherman opening a can of sardines.

“And now,” said Renfrew suddenly, “we’d better be getting home ourselves or we shall lose breakfast entirely!”

Shouting, laughing, and questioning, the boys rose to their feet.

“Yea, Explorers’ Club,” yelled Bub Currie. “Some club.”

“Wish we had one like that,” said Alan.



## CHASING GHOSTS

---

"When and where do we meet again, Mr. Renfrew?"

"Before an open fire in my library," said Renfrew. "A week from to-day. How's that?"

And "that," it seems, was a very fine plan, indeed. So it was arranged.

The ghost story had been told; the incident had come to pass, and as he walked home that night the idea germinated and spread its clean shoots through the mind of Alan.

"A club just like that one," he thought. "And a trip of exploration."



## CHAPTER III

### THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST

ALAN, hugging his knees on the great bearskin rug before Renfrew's open fireplace, turned and addressed Renfrew who sat in a corner of a roomy Chesterfield with boys piled high about him.

"It's a club," he explained. "We got it up among us fellows during the week, since that night at Pin Factory Cut. We want you to be the president of it."

"Yes, I know," said Renfrew, gazing clear-eyed at the boy. "I gathered that, but the name of the club. What did you say the name was?"

Alan grinned.

"It's the Explorers' Club," he announced. "We're going to do just what Arthur Embry and those fellows did. Only nothing deceitful, I think, like that sleeping-out affair." He caught Renfrew's eye and grinned again. "We've got the first trip all planned, if you'll go with us. We want you to be president of the club."

"Will you, Mr. Renfrew?" pleaded the voice of Bub Currie.



## THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST

---

"Sure! Go ahead," urged Eddie Adams.

"We're going to explore the Marapo first," declared Dick Rose, enticingly. "It's great. Only you've got to go with us."

"As president of the club," explained Billy Loomis.

"Ex-officio," said Renfrew, silencing the boys with his voice. "I don't think you ought to have a president though. Why don't you elect a leader and call him 'Chief Guide'; then the secretary-treasurer man would be called 'The Woodsman.' I'll be sort of president ex-officio and you can name my office that of 'Medicine Man.' Hold your elections after our meeting to-night. Now what was it I heard you say about planning a first trip?"

"Up the Marapo," said Alan. "School is out tomorrow, so in a week or two we can start. My people are willing as long as you camp with us and most of the fellows say their parents think the same way. We can get canoes at Sawyer's Falls."

"That's nine miles from here, on the river," said Billy Loomis. "We can hike over there and Mr. Chapin will take our packs over in his car. The Marapo turns into the river fifteen miles up. It's awfully wild up there. Right in the hills."

"That sounds good," said Renfrew. "I think we might do that. We could have some fine camps on the river banks. I believe the Marapo's pretty rough further up, though. You fellows will have to be ready



for hard portages and stiff pulling against rapid water."

"We've thought of that," said Alan. "You can teach us how it's done. They say there are swift currents up there. White, rushing water, where the dead logs have fallen into the river and make white bars, and we'll have to mind the rocks getting around them. And they say there are strips of yellow sand under the banks, like the seashore where we can camp and swim!"

"They say the woods are as thick as all get out, down to the waterside," chimed in Billy Loomis, "and cranes and snakes come out of the rushes when the canoes push in."

"Fish!" yelled Bub. "They jump up at the flies! And the water is clear, just like crystal, but cold! Golly!"

"Where'll we go?" asked Howard Hough.

"Anywhere," said Alan promptly. "That's the fun of it. We explore. Like Alan Quatermain" (his favorite hero, which explained in a way his attachment to Renfrew) "looking for lost places," he said. Renfrew reached out with one hand and ruffled Alan's fair hair. Alan always said the thing which stirred his memory.

"Or places that have never been found," suggested he. "I remember doing both once, with West. You remember Constable West. We searched for a trail together, and found a valley no one knew existed.



## THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST

---

Lovely, it was; cut off from civilization for years. Since the Klondike gold rush. A lost valley."

There was a breathless moment while the boys stared eagerly at him, waiting for his words.

"Throw a log on the fire," he said, and sparks flew up with a sharp, crackling sound as one of the boys obeyed him. He watched the sparks reflecting as the boys moved restlessly making their places comfortable.

"We were seeking a trail," he began, "and had made a splendid trip together in a light birch-bark canoe. We came down the Dead Bear River, and on a fair spring day we reached the lake in the valley. This was not the valley of our adventure—that lay on the other side. We were at the threshold, as it were; outside the closed door. The only entrance—

"But I'm leaping ahead.

"At Fort Walsh I had been thrown in with West a great deal. It was there I did my first work with the Force and for months I acted as his assistant. He was the senior of every officer and constable at Walsh. He had served with the Police nearly twenty years. In the Cypress Hills, in the Yukon, in South Africa with the Strathcona Horse. Yet he never seemed an older man than I was. Wiser, yes; of a vast vision in the ways of white men and red. But, well, it was fine to have him for my chum. When he was moved to the post at Peace River Crossing we took counsel together



and played our cards so that I was ordered to Peace River Crossing as well.

“Early in our work in the North some brilliant mind thought of the Dead Bear Pass. The Dead Bear River started in a promising, deep green cascade in the Rockies, north of Fort Liard. It tumbled down into the mountains and—that was all, it disappeared in the mountains. Further south, the turbulent Liard came rollicking down to the MacPherson and it was thought that somewhere in its checkered path the Dead Bear joined it. But what happened to the Dead Bear in the mountains? What did it do there? How was it lost? You see? The tracing of that river through the untrodden passes which it followed might mean many a weary mile cut from some more tortuous trail and the saving of many a life lost in the untracked mountains.

“So there we were, the two of us, after splendid days of travel; days all too short in the early northern springtime, yet each day was given the illusion of many by the multiplicity of adventures which it contained. I believe no one before us had traveled so far in a continuous journey down that stream as we had by the day we came to the end of the beginning of the Dead Bear River, the spot in the mountains where it disappeared.

“For two days before we had found the mountains closing in on the river, squeezing it more closely be-



## THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST

---

tween their granite banks. This became more and more pronounced until we found ourselves in a deep cañon where the water sometimes rushed deep between high walls of rock. The strip of sky above us became narrower and narrower and further removed as on we went, and the rock walls which were the river banks became so steep that we went on with a dread in our hearts lest we be hurled over some hidden cataract all unable to make a landing before we reached it.

“This dread gave way to a grim trust in Providence, for the banks of the narrow river soon became sheer palisades of rock, rising a thousand feet or more above us; and we knew that we must take whatever fate had in store for us, for we could never have stopped our mad rush down the torrent then.

“We hoped for the best, and we found it. Our fear was that the rapids would become all too fierce for our frail craft and lead to a cataract which would bring us to our end; but the break in the gorge came first. The river grew wider, and the palisade on the right bank retreated from the river till a gradual slope of broken rock lay between it and the river brink. Further back fell the cliff, and calmer became the water, till the trees grew on the slope as it became more gentle, and the banks dropped to the river in a shallow dip. Then suddenly the narrow walls fell apart and we entered a calm lake. We didn't know it then, but we were in the anteroom to our adventure.



"Picture a mountain lake. It is shaped like a horseshoe and we entered it from the river, high on the bend of the shoe. It is surrounded by rocky banks covered with a forest of black pine trees and beyond the forest, towering like a gigantic wall about the lake, stand the palisades of rock thousands of feet in height. Only on one side of this lake is it bare of forest. Across the base of the horseshoe the naked cliff falls to the waterside. The clear blue sky is cut out in an irregular patch by the prisoning cliff and the lake reflecting it is a vivid, placid blue as well. This is where the Dead Bear stopped and we knew it was where our work began.

"We landed and made our camp in the bend of the horseshoe, glad after the tense anxiety of our journey for the quiet of the imprisoned lake, and the beauty of it. The sky turned red along the rim of the cliff behind us when the sunset came and the towering wall which dropped to the lake opposite us was turned to a cliff of burnished gold. In the morning, after a breakfast eaten in the darkness while the sky reflected the ghost of an invisible dawn behind the mountains, we set out to explore the lake.

"We used the canoe, paddling about the edge of the mirrorlike lake which turned from a rosy pink to gold and then gradually to a soft blue, save where it reflected the immensity of the mountain wall. It was plain that this was merely an opening in a long gorge



## THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST

---

through which the river ran, and we first sought for a continuation of the chasm which would be the river's natural outlet from the lake.

"As we looked up the gorge from which we had emerged, it was noticeable that the surrounding palisades came gradually together till the wall on either side of the river met and merged as railway tracks meet and merge in the distance. So we sought for such another meeting in the palisades. West scanned the walls which surrounded the lake closely till he discovered that the naked cliff which dropped to the water's edge ran in a straight line down the valley. It did not turn to join the opposite semicircular wall. Rather, in the distance, the barrier which circled the lake swept in a curve toward it, and at a far-off spot the two walls seemed to merge. We decided then that the continuation of the gorge must lie in a line following the foot of the naked cliff. So we beached our canoe and with packs on our backs we set out to follow the wall. It was plain the river did not continue its course here. What should have been its bed was a mountain of broken rock, huge boulders heaped high like a giant gravel pile, with thick brush overgrowing it.

"We started the ascent of this obstruction at about seven in the morning. You see we hoped that at some unknown spot the river left this Shut-In-Lake (that is the name we gave it; the name you will find on a topo-



graphical map to this day) underground, perhaps under this very mountain we ascended, and resumed its bed in the gorge beyond. We started our ascent at about seven in the morning and so steep was the obstruction, so heart-breaking the climb as the loose stones gave way under our feet and the brush uprooted in our torn hands, that night fell before we reached the summit. We were torn and gasping with the tremendous exertion of the climb, and we dare not venture forward in the dark, so there we made our camp and there we spent the second night at the closed door.

“When morning came we crossed the summit of our great stone heap. It was an unbelievable distance across and traversing it had much of the hardship which the ascent had given us. Sharp, broken stones which cut our boots and bruised our feet and legs; and when we saw the gorge below it, no river was revealed. No sign of water, only a deep, rugged crevice where a river had undoubtedly once tumbled and rushed. That scene and our explorations for the day proved to us the impracticability of the Dead Bear Pass. No party could cross that barrier with packs and horses or canoe, and we, afoot and unburdened, found it a dangerous, tricky game, making our way for half a mile above the rough, dry river bed.

“So we returned to our Shut-In-Lake where the Dead Bear disappeared. Our search seemed a failure, and the return up that spirited stream with our ob-



jective unachieved loomed darkly before us. We were hot and parched, bruised and dirty, as we slid rather than climbed down the slope to the edge of the clear water. We removed our clothes and plunged into its cold depths. We plunged about in the water and romped on the shore—I remember we played leap-frog.

“I looked at West’s fine, brown body. He was a big fellow with an immensely wide chest and rippling muscles under a glowing skin. He was strong. Yet there under the towering cliff (you had to bend your head far back to see the top) with the giant barrier flung all about us, he appeared like a tiny, well-proportioned boy. A boy like those of the fairy tales whom you could pick up in one hand.

“He took his canteen into the water to fill it, and it got away from him. He plunged after it, and, perversely, it bobbed away, coming to the surface magically far out from shore. We were close to the cliff and the canteen made toward it as though pulled by an invisible string. West looked for it in the wrong place, and, when he spied it, it was close to the rock. I stood on the shore and laughed while West swam after it. Then before our eyes the canteen, bobbing serenely, approached the sheer rock and vanished as though swallowed up. We stared. . . . West trod water and blinked. . . . Then together we swam after it and with our feet on solid rock we looked into the place—the tunnel, the cavern, where the Dead Bear



calmly, slowly, without hurry or turmoil, flowed into the mountain!

“‘That must have been an avalanche,’ said West that night at our camp fire. He referred to the mountain of broken stone we had just traversed. ‘Its fall must have shut the river from its natural bed, and, rising in this lake, it found that outlet.’ He waved his pipe toward the frowning cliff opposite. ‘We’ll follow it in to-morrow.’ That was all he said, ‘We will follow it in.’ Do you understand?”

Renfrew looked into Alan’s shining eyes directly, earnestly.

“‘Follow a mountain river into the bowels of the earth. Into heaven knows what ramifications, what waterfalls, and rapids.’—That was all he said, with his black eyes thoughtful in the firelight. Of course he was thinking of where our journey was to end. You see?

“In the morning, our packs high on our shoulders, we followed it in. We opened the closed door, and passed through.

“It is hard to tell you of that journey. How there was headway above the water’s surface as we entered the tunnel breast deep in the cold stream. How the light through that headway disappeared and we moved forward in pitch blackness. How we felt our way foot by foot, nay, sometimes inch by inch, stumbling, falling below the surface, shouting to one another, anxious



## THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST

---

for each other's safety. Sometimes we found a narrow shore along the side of the tunnel. Once we debated for a moment, shaking hands solemnly without seeing one another, before we plunged under a place where the roof touched the water. We dashed our heads when the roof became abruptly low, we bruised our legs on unseen rocks and were sometimes hurled down unseen falls. Finally, we saw a dim light ahead. Unexpected, undreamed of, we had mentally decided that this black pilgrimage must come to nothing . . . or worse . . . you know. And an ominous murmur came with the light. I struck the rapids first, blindly falling into them over an unseen step. I went helplessly with the rush of water, clutching vainly for a hold against it. As luck had it I was flung with a stunning jolt against hard rock. I clung to it desperately, deafened by the roar of falling water and dazzled by a stream of sunlight. A red mass came hurtling down the rapids toward me, and, with one hand grasping the rock, I reached out, snatching at West's body. I seized his belt and with my arms nearly torn from their sockets I drew him slowly in. He locked his arm in mine and aided me. It seemed hours before he was beside me, and we were both pressed against the rock by the mass of water.

"This was the end of the tunnel and my rock had saved us from a plunge over a hundred-foot waterfall as the river emerged from the mountainside and fell



to a valley below. When we recovered from our exhaustion we joined the ropes we carried and fastening one end to our rock we swung down, West first, till we found a scanty foothold beside the cataract and after a perilous descent we collapsed wearily on the top of a wooded slope.

"There on the slope under the foot of the mountain we camped, lay still all the afternoon, and slept late on the following morning. We were chilled by the night air but our clothes were hardly damp when we surveyed the valley in the morning from the cliff behind us which towered straight and high as the cliff which barricaded Shut-In Lake; the hill fell away to a pretty, peaceful valley. The waterfall to our right continued in a tumbling stream which disappeared into the woodland below only to reappear as a silver strip further down the valley and form a peaceful lake, and beside the lake we discerned with indescribable amazement a community of log houses, and, from the chimneys of several of these, smoke curled lazily aloft.

"I say we were amazed. It is an inadequate term. These were unmistakably the houses of white men, and the nearest white settlement we knew of was one hundred and sixty miles away!

"We made up our packs and descended the slope.

"The thing happened as we approached the bottom of a hill. I heard a resonant twang, as though some one had picked at a bass chord of some invisible harp.



## THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST

---

It startled me, sounding in the profound silence of the utter wilderness, and something shot by my ear, singing through the air. I turned to West and discovered him frowning, with blood streaming down his cheek from a cut above his ear. Angrily I leaped into the brush at the sound of the plucked chord, but nothing was there; we found nothing, nobody, although we scoured the woods. It was a slight cut and we stopped the flow of blood with cold water.

"As we approached the settlement on a well-trodden trail we came upon three men. They were quaint, gaunt men, browned by the sun and clad in garments of ragged cloth and crudely prepared skins. They appeared at first to be Indians, for their long hair was braided and hung forward over either shoulder, but their complexions and their beards betrayed them. One was venerable, with hair of dirty white; another, quite young, had brown hair; the third was the most remarkable of the three. He had a face like a vulture with black eyes set so close to the ridge of his nose that his face appeared deformed. He was tall and his dark black hair made his narrow face appear narrower than was natural, and it accentuated the high and protuberant cheek bones which seemed as high almost as his eyes. All three of these queer men carried long bows and a sheaf of arrows was stuck in the belt of each of them. Strong, crude bows they were, made obviously for the deadly use of men in dire need.



## RENFREW OF THE ROYAL MOUNTED

---

Remembering West's wound I eyed the three men searchingly, thinking the man who had shot that arrow might betray himself. Their eyes searched us as well, and none of us betrayed what was in our minds.

"'Good morning,' said West steadily.

"'Where did you come from?' demanded the venerable one, getting to the point at once. He seemed to speak eagerly.

"'We came down the waterfall,' said West, shifting his searching gaze to him.

"The old man sighed.

"'You cannot help us,' he said. Then as though to explain himself, he added, 'It ain't myself, you know. I'm thinkin' of the young fellers.'

"The tall man with the deformed face interrupted harshly. 'Come on,' he said, and, turning, he made his way down the trail.

"We followed our remarkable guides."

Renfrew, with his arms about Dick Rose's slim shoulders, leaned forward a little, as though to conjure in the blazing embers a more vivid picture.

"You know an adventure of this sort," he said, "like the flying in war time, like all incredible, unbelievable things which happen to a man, takes its place afterward in a sort of attic of remembrance. A nook of vague memories to which one goes on a night like this and brings them out into the light. And in a workaday world they seem fanciful, and like a dream. I know



## THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST

---

this thing happened. I can see West before me, the bloodstain on his face, following those incredible guides in the clear silence of the wilderness path. And yet you know it seems impossible. It is a difficult thing to explain. . . .

"One thing beside the alert, capable figure of West and his intelligent eyes, keenly awaiting the unexpected, dominates the memory I have of this adventure. It is the man Greeve. The vulture-faced man with the long black locks. He seemed always present when we spoke with any of the people in the settlement. I gathered the impression somehow that he feared we might gather undesirable information. Afterward I discovered that I was right.

"The settlement consisted of about twenty-four people. They lived in the log houses and seemed to subsist on the bounty of nature almost wholly. It surprised us that every sign indicated a total lack of communication with the outside world. The utensils necessary to their daily tasks and livelihood were without exception, rusty, broken, worn; frequently they had been replaced with crude substitutes fashioned by hand from materials provided by nature. Bows and arrows, and sling shots had replaced the guns which hung rusty on the cabin walls, useless for lack of ammunition. Some rude endeavor had been made here and there to plant corn and to cultivate the wild berry bushes. The settlement was notable for the ingenious inventions which



had taken the place of utensils common to the simplest life in civilization. These things were interesting, but they emphasized to us a growing fear that the valley in which this community lay had no way out. That it was in short a splendid, open prison. And so we found it.

"We questioned Greeve who held us always transfixed with a taciturn and disapproving eye. He gave us little information except to assure us that there was, indeed, no way out. 'You will live and die here,' he said. And he seemed to derive a sinister pleasure from that thought. When we asked him how the valley was found he shut up, and he nearly snarled in an exuberance of anger and distrust.

"Later we questioned the venerable man whose long, thick beard gave him a benevolent, fatherly appearance. Greeve was present as usual, sitting at the fireplace of his cabin where we were his guests—or prisoners. He looked away from us who sat around a table in the center of the cabin. It was after a meal.

"Ethan Jude, which was the old man's name, seemed a little fearful of Greeve. Greeve, despite the fact that his voice was harsh and his snarl a ready one, was dictator of this colony. There seemed to be no children in the group, indeed, there were few women folk. Young men there were, but of a shy and surly disposition. Three of them I saw. Most of the wretched handful were people past their prime."



## THE RIVER WHICH WAS LOST

---

The door of the library opened almost noiselessly, yet by the sound of that little noise Renfrew seemed to sense the presence of the intruder and her identity. He leaped to his feet and the boys about him were scattered in wild confusion. It was the gray-haired lady, his mother, and the boys stood upon their feet and watched, scarcely understanding, the gentle manner of his greeting and the protective care with which he approached her and took from her a tray she carried. It was almost as if she was some strange princess who had then and there arrived from some foreign country and, out of sheer helplessness, demanded an especial courtesy and consideration. It occurred to Alan and Bub and Dick and Billy at the same instant that here was a long cry from the high Northwest and Shut-In Lake and from all turbulent and rugged things.

"If it ever occurred to you youngsters," said Renfrew's mother, with her hand upon his tall shoulder and encircled by his long arm, "that you could ever consume some chocolate layer cake, some fruit jelly with whipped cream on it, and some lemonade, why, there it is, and now is the time to do it. I hope I haven't interrupted a story."

"Why, yes, you have, you dear little mother," answered Renfrew. "And we're glad you did, too, because right at that particular moment the story demanded that the loveliest lady in all the country should come in with just the precise burden that you were



## RENFREW OF THE ROYAL MOUNTED

---

carrying, and sit by the fire in the most comfortablest chair in the whole room and listen to the rest of it. Didn't it, fellows?"

"Yes, it did."

"You bet it did!"

"Yes, Mrs. Renfrew!"

"Here, sit here!"

"No, she's going to sit here!"

"No, here, by me!"

And while many hands drew up a goodly number of chairs for the gray-haired lady, Renfrew, the tall, the impassive, the big and strong, drew the lady to him and kissed her on both her cheeks, and before them all, he let her kiss him, as well.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CLOSED DOOR

ENTHRONED, then, beside the fire, sat the gray-haired lady. After the turmoil of clinking spoons and tinkling glasses had somewhat abated, she sat with them all and listened; and while the boys lived through the story as it fell from Renfrew's lips, she lived it, too. But there was this difference: the boys saw a brave adventure unfold before them, and that was all, but who could tell what was in the mind of the gray-haired lady as she sat looking into the fire? There was the brave adventure clearly enough, but with it was something of pride for the tall, strong redcoat who strode through it so manfully with West; something of a fear which could not be forgotten merely because it was all over before she had even heard of it, and something of sorrow, too, and pity, for events which, for the boys, were overwhelmed by the adventure.

"Let me see," said Renfrew, "where did I leave off?"

He was amply reminded.

"Jude was telling his story," was the essence of these reminders.



"Oh, yes. That was it. Jude was telling his story.

"They, too, it seemed, had entered this valley through the tunnel which we had traversed. But in that time the river had not run through it. There was gold in this valley. It was that which had brought them. And the Dead Bear passed down the gorge. Shut-In Lake had not existed; the river had gone straight by in that time.

"They had come up the Dead Bear. I gathered that it had been a desperate and cruelly hard journey. They lay at rest in Shut-In Lake valley (remember there was no lake there then, only the river running across the base of the horseshoe). I asked Jude where it continued down the gorge. Sure enough it had run in a bed where the great stone pile lay.

"As the old man unfolded his story, developing it in a halting manner, urged by many questions from West and myself, Greeve watched him closely, and, I thought, nervously.

"These people were a party of farmer folk from Minnesota. They had been lured to the North by tales of gold. It was in the time of the Yukon rush and, at the time they started, a never-ending stream of pack trains was rushing up the Four Passes from the sea to the bitter Klondike. Rushing in a turmoil of poorly equipped argosies and finding there the scant, cold welcome of the North. No food or stores were there to replenish the frantic hordes, and many failed in



their quest for gold, or perished on the tundra, engulfed in the fierce rush which they had joined.

“This party, though, was made up of shrewd farmers, and they did not go blindly into the adventure. The gold rush had been afoot almost two years when they joined it, and they feared the failure from lack of stores and provisions on the manifold passes from the sea. But they had a resolute and indomitable leader. Whatever were his faults, it was Greeve who put fire in the party then, and, maintaining their spirit in bitter hardships, through untrodden places, he led them over unsurmountable obstacles, and, as it developed, achieved a journey that no man had ever made before.

“His plan was to avoid the crowded ways which the gold-mad horde took by boat to the North and over the Four Passes into the Yukon, and so to avoid also the peril of famine which that great mass brought with it to the northern wilderness. To do this, he led the party up to Edmonton, from Edmonton to the Peace River, thence to Fort Liard and from there he attempted to invade the Yukon from the east. This was before the attempts made by Routledge and Moodie of the Mounted Police; and Moodie well nigh perished in his journey while many, following the trail he opened, died in the attempt. So you can see that the assault which Greeve made on that bleak mountain barrier spoke of great courage and resolution in the man.



"We questioned Jude closely about this. It seems that above Fort Liard they had found the mouth of the Dead Bear, and, fired by Greeve's tremendous resolution, had faced its wild waters. Surmounting many obstacles of turbulent water, steep chasms and perilous ascents, they had made their way up the river to the place on the other side of the tunnel where Shut-In Lake now lay. There had been no lake there then. This fact is of the greatest importance. No lake had lain in that valley then. The Dead Bear had run straight down past the foot of the naked cliff. We questioned Jude about the stone pile which we had climbed, and he made a great show of ignorance. Greeve interrupted us then, and in his turn asked about the barrier, while Jude plucked nervously at his beard with his old, dull eyes on Greeve. Greeve wanted to know about the barrier. It had not been there, he said, when they came; only the river running past the cliff. It must have been a landslide, he declared, and that had filled the valley with the lake until the water reached the tunnel.

"The tunnel, it seemed, had been high and dry above the river when they came; no doubt a river bed in hundreds of years gone by. And it was through that tunnel they had entered the valley. As they lay at rest in the Shut-In Valley, some one had discovered the tunnel, and they thought it a cave in the mountainside. Jude had explored it; he and Greeve and another man



## THE CLOSED DOOR

---

named Centnor, and of course they had found it not a cave but a tunnel which opened on this valley. And here they had found gold—the gold they sought; the gold they had left their American farm lands to discover. They had settled in the valley, Jude explained, and mined their gold, washed it out, you know. And then this thing had come upon them one day, all unexpectedly. The water had rushed through the tunnel and had overrun their gold mine. Also it imprisoned them.

“‘But surely,’ I said, ‘there must be a way out.’ Had they explored? Yes, they had followed the river, had roamed for miles through the mountains, but always it was too rough. They were too badly equipped. Their ammunition failed. Good God! Couldn’t I believe them? They had tried. Greeve had taken a party down the river. They were killed in the rapids; all killed save Greeve and one other, and here they were. Rich! Hundreds of thousands of dollars’ worth of gold! As useless as sand! It wasn’t for himself he cared, Jude explained. He was old. It was the younger ones. Two of these younger ones, I found out, were his sons.

“We questioned him more closely, and we questioned Greeve as well, and you know as the story unraveled like a skein with their answers, we saw a terrible and pathetic situation exposed.

“Often I have read fanciful and improbable stories



of peoples and kingdoms, and lost races who have been imprisoned for centuries by natural barriers—an impregnable cliff or precipice, or a surrounding desert. But because I know that no such natural barrier can exist I have never found these tales plausible enough to be interesting. Yet here was a lost colony, isolated in the wilderness, as completely imprisoned as though surrounded by iron bars. And yet a river found an outlet from the valley where they lived, and the wild mountain country about them betrayed no unnatural or insurmountable barrier. Why, then, were they shut in? Why could not the indomitable leader, whose resolution brought them this far on the perilous journey, lead them out to civilization? We probed the two men with questions and we found that the indomitable leader's courage had been broken by his first failure and calamity; that these people were imprisoned by fear.

“When Greeve had taken out that expedition to follow the river down, he had taken his pick of the best men and the youngest men of the party. But though they were strong, and their strength had served them well to ascend rapids and clamber over rough portages, they had never guided a frail canoe down a moving wall of foamy water inclosed by granite cliffs, and in such a pass the expedition met with defeat. The canoes were smashed, and the men went down the white water with the splintered fragments. Only Greeve and one other survived. That other man died quickly,



his skull being crushed, and Greeve returned alone. He returned alone, and his nerve was broken. The rest were like sheep without him. Without him they could never have left Minnesota. He still ruled them, he alone could organize them in the struggle which they now faced with the elements. Several times they set out into the mountains seeking a pass, but found the country too rough. The river was the only way and Greeve would not try the river again. So, with no spirit to challenge the forces which locked them in, they fought those forces for their very existence. And the longer they stayed, the more impotent they became to attempt an escape. Their ammunition gave out, their clothes and equipment failed them. They became as savages without the resource of savages. A terrible, hopeless position.

"I could not face it for myself, and I know West would never consent to stay imprisoned so. I asked Greeve if he would lead us down the river; but in great agitation he refused. He could never face that river again. He told us of its danger and entered into a detailed description of it. As it descended in the mountains it became too fierce for any human being to cope with, he explained. The high walls closed in upon it. It was certain death. I remembered our trip down the Dead Bear, our plunge through the black tunnel. Nothing could be more trying than that had been, I thought.



“‘Let us try for a way out,’ I said to West.

“Greeve rose to his feet and stood glaring at us. ‘No!’ he shouted harshly. ‘You will not! There is no way out of here. I tell you no way out!’

“West looked at Greeve for a moment, and he clamped his lips together. Then, ignoring the excited man, he spoke to me. ‘Right-o!’ he said. ‘We’ll start to-morrow.’

“Greeve said no more. He subsided, and as West and I took up our plans together, he spoke in muffled but angry tones with the old man, who I thought seemed to shrink from the things he said. Later they got up and went out together and we heard them speaking in low, excited tones outside the door. Greeve soon returned to us and we told him our plans. It was simply to follow the river as we had followed it before and trust to luck, to Providence, to God, for a safe journey out. We knew it would be impossible to go out through the tunnel as we came in; to breast the rapids in the dark. To swim up under water where the roof of the tunnel touched the surface. You see?

“Greeve was silent and only West and I spoke as we got to bed. That night I awoke in the dark and found a form leaning over my bed in the blackness. I caught a man’s arm in both my hands and held it while the unseen one struggled to free himself. I called out, and West, leaping up, took the man off me. I lit a candle and it revealed Greeve pinioned in West’s grasp.



## THE CLOSED DOOR

---

On my blanket lay a carving knife, its pointed blade ugly in the light. Then the door was thrown open and old Jude entered with wide, excited eyes. 'Greeve,' he cried. 'I must speak with Greeve.'

"Greeve pulled himself up erect. 'Get out of here!' he cried to the old man. And furthermore he told him vividly where he could go. The old man turned to the door. 'Come and see me right away,' he pleaded. 'Something I've got to tell you.' And then he went out and closed the door.

"'Wanted food,' said Greeve sheepishly then; and he pointed to the dried meat laying on the table which we had moved over to a spot beyond my bed. 'I got the knife,' he explained. 'Must have stumbled across your bed in the dark.'

"West, the knife in his hand, moved over to the door and opened it. 'Eat with Jude,' he said. 'And stay there the rest of the night.'

"Greeve looked at him, measuring the man; and then saying no more, he left the cabin. 'Oh, Greeve,' cried Jude's voice outside. 'I want to speak with you.' And I heard Greeve cursing as West shut the door and bolted it. I heard more, too. I heard it through the window, which had only a skin to shelter it. West blew out the candle and that, I think, threw the old man off his guard. 'Don't harm these men,' he said. 'To kill them may be the end of us. They may never



get out, and if they do they can never find the body. They can't hang you if they can't find the body.'

" 'Shut up!' cried Greeve. And the voices ceased. I told what I had heard to West and the next day we took our secret with us down the river.

"It was more than a month after that when we returned. Of course we found a way out and we came upon Fort Liard and the Liard River unexpectedly, while we still wondered wearily how long the hardships and the dangers of our journey were to continue. So we made our way back again with supplies and tools for building boats with which to bring out the exiles and their gold.

"When we arrived at the lost valley once more we made our way amid a little group of excited, voluble outcasts, who were verging on hysterics to find their way to civilization open once more. News of our coming had preceded us and we found Greeve standing at the door of his cabin. He leaned against the postern wearily and his eyes were unnaturally bright as he observed us. We must have appeared painfully smart, well clothed and well fed, brilliantly uniformed among that ragged crew.

"West explained how we had found the way and how sorry he was that they had missed it. 'We are very sorry,' he said gently. 'Had your own expedition got a little further all would have been plain sailing. Of course you had not the equipment.' He



regarded the man whom he addressed closely. Greeve's beady eyes, close together in his vulturine countenance, were burning. As West spoke he breathed heavily, and more heavily, seeming to repress a tremendous agitation. His face was scarlet.

"West explained our plans. We would help the exiles to stake out their valley, then we would all return. He had supplies and tools with which to outfit the expedition. Later we would come down the Dead Bear to Shut-In Lake and attempt to make a new outlet for the river. If we took it away from the tunnel the water would drain from their gold field. Then a new colony would be established here and the mine worked. We would try to blast through the landslide which barred the river.

"Greeve reared up suddenly and a fiendish light leaped into his eyes. He shrieked a wild, rending shriek like a tortured lion, and with the shriek he dashed forward at West. Jude and many others drew him back, holding him fast. West, observing him, coolly stepped forward and laid a hand on his forehead. He made an exclamation. 'The man's in a fever,' he said. 'Pneumonia, surely! Get him to bed.'

"Greeve, white now, or rather gray, gazed at West steadily. 'It is all over then,' he said. 'You will find his body. I shut out the whole world to hide him, but you have found me out. I shut out the whole world.'

"His head fell forward on his chest and they car-



ried him into his cabin. It was pneumonia sure enough, and in four days the man was dead from it. But he told his story first—what we did not get from Jude.

“Greeve had killed a man. It is not important why he killed him, that is one of the bitter, dreadful things the grim palisades must always hide. The man’s name was Keelan. On the day Greeve killed him they had been working together, digging in the base of the great cliff in Shut-In Valley where they alone believed gold was to be found. The crime committed, Greeve threw the body into the river which promptly threw it upon the rocks, giving it up again. For days Greeve felt the presence of that body threatening him with the halter. He knew of the Police work in the mountains at that time. It was in the gold rush for the Klondike, and Steele and his force, working from Dawson, ran down all evildoers relentlessly. The people in the valley would want an explanation of Keelan’s absence—and then the redcoats would come, he knew. So he came back to the valley, and procured dynamite, all he could get together. To hide that body he blasted away the face of the cliff, and, as he said, ‘something happened.’ Why, I cannot tell you (nursing his secret alone, until to save himself from madness he confided his story to the patriarchal Jude—to regret his confession immediately—the poor wretch could never know himself), but the explosion tore away the great cliff to its very turrets and it fell in the great pile of stone



## THE CLOSED DOOR

---

which I have described to you, barring the Dead Bear's course. This done, and the body literally swallowed up by the earth, Greeve made his way back to the valley, silent and scared. Then the river, shut in, filled the opening in the gorge until it rose to the tunnel which in its time had no doubt been a riverbed. It found the tunnel, and its waters closed the door; shut out the dreaded redcoats; shut out the world.

"Greeve, thereupon, by his courage and resource in that time of terrible stress, made himself the leader of that group of outcasts. He had to lead, you see, for he had to prevent any one finding a way out. He led the only expedition which was sent, and deliberately he brought it to disaster. He had a mad obsession that the door must not be opened. When we entered the valley he tried to slay us. When we tried to get out he attempted our lives again. A tragic, futile man."

Renfrew stopped abruptly. The boys were a little silent and thoughtful.

"He closed the door," murmured Alan, staring at the flames.

"He shut out the world, and he shut out life itself from his fellows," said Renfrew.

Suddenly he arose, flinging boys to right and left as he did so.

"Then it's up the Marapo!" he cried, stamping his feet to bring the circulation back to them; and the boys, becoming suddenly active, burst into full cry:



"Up the Marapo!" they cried.

"Yea, Explorers' Club!"

"Oh, you West!"

"Some story!"

"Closed the door!"

Various inspirations moved them, and in the meantime Renfrew turned to his mother.

"If I leave you again for the wild turbulence of the Marapo; for life in the wilderness with these rough men, will you forgive me?"

There followed an awful moment. What if Renfrew's mother wouldn't let him go?

"My mother said it's all right," pleaded Alan.

She pondered it. The suspense was horrible.

"Very well," she assented finally. "For two weeks." And the watchful Alan could have sworn that behind her grave face there was the ghost of a smile.

Renfrew kissed her.

"That's a good mother," he said; then to the Explorers' Club: "We'll meet here just a week from today. Then we'll make plans for the trip. We'll have the next story at our own camp fire," he said.



## CHAPTER V

### THE FEAR OF WHITE WATER

"SUPPOSIN' a fellow upset in these rapids. D'you suppose it would probably drown him?" Bobby Granger, the youngest member of the Explorers' Club, shivered as he glanced at the white rushing waters of the Marapo, and fortified himself with an extra large bite of bread and bacon against the thought of the coming perils of the afternoon.

"Sure it would," a voice from the circle gathered around the noon camp fire replied with cheerful non-chalance.

"Bowl him down from boulder to slippery boulder; and he'd be knocked unconscious and drowned!" This from Billy Loomis, who was a senior in high school and knew many things.

But Renfrew spoke. "Don't cry wolf, Billy," he said. "D'you suppose I'd take you fellows up this stream if an upset meant sure death?"

Bobby, only partly reassured, glanced doubtfully at the tall, broad-shouldered young man. This was the



second day of the club's first long expedition in search of "lost places," and Bobby's nerves had been severely tried by the long morning of desperate paddling among rocks, snags, and treacherous cross-currents. His canoe had tipped and lurched until Bobby's heart had been in his mouth half the time. And he wasn't sure that he cared whether the Explorers' Club ever found Lake Surprise, that diminutive blue spot on the Government Survey map to which, so the map insisted, no trail or footpath led.

There was a quiver in his voice as he insisted, "But a fellow could never swim in water like this."

"Perhaps not," said Renfrew, "but he could always walk if his stroke failed him. Haven't seen a place more than four feet deep all the morning. Besides, Bobby, don't you get the idea that a thing isn't worth seeing through just because the doing of it scares you. If that were the way of men we'd still be hanging to trees by our tails."

"I wasn't scared," said Bobby, which was untrue.

Renfrew looked at him with a quick glance, and it said to Bobby, more distinctly than words: "To be afraid of confessing a weakness is the worst sort of fear in the world." Bobby knew that, and he felt very small.

"Are rapids in the North like this?" asked Alan, as he watched the whirling water.

"Yes. Often. But I suppose you have in mind



## THE FEAR OF WHITE WATER

---

the very turbulent rapids which men call white water. They are much fiercer than this. They are like express trains of solid water. Only the surface of the great mass is disturbed; a world of water, sweeping irresistibly by with a sullen roar. When it comes down to the cañons where the rocks are, it thunders and raves like a mad monster; it sends up mountains of spume as it crashes against the granite, and boils and seethes in the crevices. When a man goes down in the rapids of the North, he doesn't come back."

Renfrew looked at them and smiled grimly, remembering things.

"Have you ever seen a man go down?" they cried. And Paul Hurlbut, who was more explicit, tagged along with "Down in the rapids, I mean?"

"There was Red Angus," said Renfrew, the grim smile still wrinkling his bronzed face.

"He went down?" asked Eddie, in the pause which followed. "And was killed?"

"He went down," assented Renfrew, "and was killed. But not in the rapids. No, that was another man, the man who was killed in the rapids."

There was a disturbance as the Explorers closed in, eager to hear the story they had angled for so skillfully.

"You know," Renfrew said, gazing into the flashing water, "it isn't easy in a true story to pick out your beginning. I think I'll begin with telling you about



the characters. There are three of them, two men and a boy. I'm not sure who is the hero. Perhaps I had better let you pick him out for yourselves.

"There was Angus. The men called him Red Angus because his face was red and his hair and beard were fiery red as well. He was a massive, burly man and had been a white water man until his drunken fights and his bullying had made him useless to the company. A white water man is one who runs the heavy timbered boats with their tremendous loads up and down the white water of the rapids in the Northern rivers. This is a job which demands more strength than is possessed by most of the strongest men of the North. He must pit his bone and sinew against the fiercest force of nature—water run wild. Good men are hard to get for this job, so you may be sure that Red Angus offended badly before he was chucked. He made the men who worked with him so frightened of his red-hot temper, that they often refused to take boat with him. For some time after he lost his job he roamed the North Cheechaco, living from hand to mouth. He struck pay dirt when people began exploring and prospecting for minerals, oils and farmlands in the North. He made an invaluable guide and leader for such expeditions. People who knew nothing of his bad temper, or of his drinking which fed it, paid him a great deal to guide them.

"In these expeditions he was always accompanied by



## THE FEAR OF WHITE WATER

---

White Arrow. That's the boy. He was a Blackfoot Indian and about fourteen years old then. Heaven only knows where he came from. Indian youngsters are generally very obedient to their parents, so it is to be presumed that he had none, or that if he had they were a poor lot. For this boy (Whitey, every one called him) was an adoring disciple of the man Angus— You know, some time in every fellow's life a man comes along—just drifts in—and you learn to love him. Unconsciously you follow him and take up his spirit. You light your own torch from the one he holds. Be careful who that man is.

“It was so with White Arrow. Red Angus became his god; he had only a very vague idea that there was any other. He accepted the beatings Angus gave him, which were severe, sat silent and wide-eyed by the fire listening to his cursing, and on occasions ran errands for him, providing him with drink, serving him in good and in evil. White Arrow knew no other home than that place where Angus slept. On expeditions for which Angus played guide, Whitey was cook and dishwasher, general servant. Physically he was a very splendid fellow, indeed. Like all forest animals his whole body was rippling, elastic muscle, and his senses were as keen as a wolf's. So much for White Arrow.

“The other man was MacKenzie.

“Stewart MacKenzie was a corporal of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. Physically, he compared



with Angus as a staghound compares with a grizzly bear. He was shorter—hardly six feet tall—and he was rawboned and wiry. In place of the blind fury which distinguished Angus, he possessed a cold, dependable courage which calmly faced death or bitter suffering as it had faced life, which had brought him bitter failure. This courage characterizes many Scotchmen. Its foundation and its keystone is faith.

“MacKenzie was religious with a tremendous faith which lived through every blow of misfortune. His confidence in his God knew no bounds. His was a God of unswerving justice; and his duty was only tolerable to him because he believed that, as a policeman, he was the instrument of that justice. With an inspired confidence he was unswerving in the face of death itself.

“Once in the Cypress Hills the tiny wooden church burned down. The minister, undaunted, commandeered the town saloon, concealed the stock of trade, swept the floors and made his temple there. The worshipers came and the service was about to begin, when through the door came a great hulking cattleman looking for drink.

“With a stream of curses he demanded his liquor. The minister told him the new nature of the place and bade him worship or depart. On this, the intruder, greatly amused, declared his intention of shooting up the place. He drew his gun and warned every one to



## THE FEAR OF WHITE WATER

---

duck. Knowing their man, they ducked. Every one but MacKenzie. He came forward and spoke with cold anger flashing in his blue eyes, seemingly unconscious of the death which touched his side.

"Dinna ye know, man, that this is the house of God?" he said, and his voice rang out clearly with its Scotch burr. "Do what ye will with yer gun, it is your way, God help you; but do it on yer knees!"

"The man swore, and MacKenzie struck him in the face. The man dropped his gun and sank to his knees. MacKenzie knelt beside him and the service went on. That was MacKenzie.

"At the beginning of this story he was on duty at a lone post called Black Lake. It is in northern Saskatchewan near the Manitoba border.

"It was here at Black Lake that MacKenzie heard how Red Angus committed his murderous crime. It happened on the bank of the Yellow Knife River. One morning the party Angus was guiding had broken camp and stowed their packs in the boats. The camp had been pitched on the high and rocky bank of the river, about forty feet above the water. All the party were at the water's edge except Angus and one of his employers who stood on the high bank above. White Arrow was up there, too.

"There had been bad feeling between Angus and this man for some time. Some money had been missing and Angus or White Arrow was suspected. They were



discussing the subject now and the men in the boats watched impatiently, because the white waters of the river were high, and, being freed of the heaviest anchors, the boats were straining in the current. The argument became heated, and suddenly Red Angus flared in a fury of temper. The watchers in the boats saw their comrade scourge with words this red fury of the North; then with horror, saw Angus tear the wretched man from the ground, and lift him, kicking and shrieking above his head. For a long moment the man struggled there, foolishly; and then was flung down the bank, bounding hideously from boulder to boulder, and dropping finally into the water, a smashed and broken body. They saw the body swept down in the whirling waters of the Yellow Knife till it was folded under by the current; magically, terribly, their friend was gone.

"In another sense Red Angus and the Indian boy were gone as well. They had disappeared into the forest, and the deserted party found their unpracticed woodcraft useless to follow them. Without Angus, the boats were useless, too; and so they set out to find civilization overland. Two of them lived to find their way in, and from the one of these two who could speak coherently—the other having gone mad—MacKenzie got the story.

"Some hundreds of miles south of the wild barrens through which the Yellow Knife runs, is the settle-



ment of Garton. It is a collection of wooden houses, weatherbeaten to a cheerless gray color, set down in the heart of the great brush-covered plains of northern Manitoba. Garton was surrounded by the changing sylvan beauty of the clean open, but it was a place of ugly habitations, and its inhabitants were lawless, uncouth, and quite as ugly. I suppose Kettering was to blame. This was part of his domain. He was the sheriff down at Poulton, twenty miles to the south, and closely in touch with the railway. Kettering was a politician. By virtue of his politics, Kettering held high office, which made him something more than ordinary. Because of the nature of his politics, which were dirty, he was something decidedly less.

“To every town of the Canadian West comes a strangely assorted throng of waifs and strays at the closing of each season. In the late spring come the lumbermen through with the drive. In the winter come the harvesters, and those who have guided and worked the trails through the hunting season. In the summer there are the jobless ones. They come roistering into the towns, and riotously spend all they have made at their labor. Then, until their season comes again, they live in the jails and the cheap lodging houses, always riotous, knowing no other pleasure.

“Garton was a paradise for such as these. It had cheap lodging houses, cheap food, drinking and gambling halls, and ample credit. Every wastrel was a



voter, and his presence was beautiful in the sight of Kettering. Garton was always filled with a very congenial crowd. Also it was in Manitoba, and here the Mounted Police had no power. It was out of their jurisdiction.

"Red Angus, after the murder, made straight for Garton. There he could wait among kindred spirits until the chance came to slip out of Canada. So, in the course of relentless events, which a mounted policeman on the trail of his man followed relentlessly, Stewart MacKenzie came to Garton, too.

"Far to the north he had heard an Indian in camp on the brown banks of the Missatasek, tell of how he had been cheated in a game of cards at Garton, where 'the white man knows no law.' The cheat had been described as 'the great red worker of the White Horse.' This meant the White Horse Rapids of the Yukon which had taken the lives of many men and had been conquered by very few. Angus was one of the conquerors. So MacKenzie knew that the 'great red worker' was in Garton.

"So MacKenzie came to Garton in the late summer when the wagon track and the brush were dry and yellow, and only the winding water of the little river was cool. Here under the blazing August sunlight, the only music was the soft splashing of water as the trout leaped in the stream. By the stream the trees seemed thicker and made cool, shadowed nooks, well screened



## THE FEAR OF WHITE WATER

---

from the wagon track. Into one of these nooks, on the river bank, about a mile from the settlement MacKenzie drove his buckboard. It was noontime, and MacKenzie made his camp and prepared his meal.

“First he had gone to Poulton. For, as I have said, Manitoba is not police territory and in Manitoba MacKenzie had to coöperate with local authority. In this case the local authority was Kettering, the sheriff, as you know.

“When MacKenzie came to confer with Kettering, he did not wear his scarlet-coated uniform, for he wished Angus to get no warning. He wore mufti. He had come from the railway in a hired buckboard, and, as he drove into the town, found himself the object of unwelcome attention. A small group of boys and other town folk watched him curiously as he drove up to the livery barn and a small group followed him over to the sheriff’s office. This office was a bare, one-story building of clapboards which resembled nothing so much as those miserable real estate offices which spoil the beauty of bits of suburban country various people are trying to sell to others.

“MacKenzie had turned to face this group of spectators twice; once when he left the livery barn, and again before he entered Kettering’s office. The first time only one of all the group caught his attention. This was an Indian boy clad in a loose cotton shirt and a pair of long corduroy trousers which were prevented



from slipping over his hips by a red handkerchief which he used as a belt. What caught MacKenzie's attention was the gleaming interest in the boy's dark eyes. He knew that the boy was committing his features and his figure to the infallible memory of the red Indian. The second time he faced the group of idlers, MacKenzie caught this boy in the act of turning on his heel; and MacKenzie watched as the boy cut lots with an easy, swift lope towards the woods. Of course MacKenzie knew of White Arrow, and he knew then that a warning was speeding on its way to his quarry. This made speed imperative. But Kettering did not seem to think so.

"MacKenzie knew what kind of man Red Angus was. Here was no blustering bully. A giant, rather, moved by a blind and reckless rage. Also, he was in the midst of a lawless crowd which it was to be expected would be very drunk. More than fur might be expected to fly in Garton in the warm moments which would precede the arrest of Red Angus. MacKenzie wanted Kettering and two men to accompany him. He was in great haste, and he made his request with little ceremony.

"Kettering was in no such spirit, however. He protested that MacKenzie was not in uniform. How could he know he was of the R.N.W.M.P.? MacKenzie presented his proofs and warrants, hastily and with no ceremony at all. Again he demanded the assistance



he would need. Kettering was 'anxious, of course, to do the right thing,' but this was 'a serious matter.' A murderer at Garton? And the Mounted Police coming in for him? It was hardly a case for the Mounted Police. This seemed so irregular—

"At about this point MacKenzie knew with what manner of man he had to deal. He pointed out that the important thing at the moment was to get the other two men and start for Garton. A warning was already on its way and they must win to Garton before it. Kettering was most disturbed. But this would not be possible. Two good men were not to be had so easily; besides he could do nothing without investigation. This concerned the rights of a free-born Briton. He must get in touch with Regina, the capital, by wire—

"MacKenzie was thinking of a tireless and fleet brown boy, loping steadily over short cuts known only to boyhood; loping through the playing shadows of the bush; a White Arrow speeding with its warning. He leaned over Kettering's desk with flashing eyes.

"'Man,' he said deeply, 'do ye not know the sacredness of God's justice or of man's? Ha' ye no spine or heart in ye? On me soul, it looks as though ye were shielding the guilty!'

"Kettering had little liking for the sound of that. It implied a crime which could ruin him. With an



oath he cried: 'I swear to God I mean no such thing! I swear—'

"'Yer easy familiarity wi' God gives ye an advantage in argument which I canna cope with!' said MacKenzie, and turning with disgust from the man, he stamped over to the livery barn, got his buckboard and was soon swaying and bouncing in the wagon track to beat the Indian boy to Garton, twenty miles away. He would face the warm moments of the arrest alone."



## CHAPTER VI

### MACKENZIE COMES BACK

RENFREW regarded the boys with narrowed eyes.

"That was a very brave decision MacKenzie made, don't you think?" he said.

"You bet it was," said Billy Loomis, and very gravely Alan nodded his assent.

"Did he have a gun?" Paul Hurlbut wanted all the facts.

Renfrew nodded.

"Yes, he had a gun.

"And now here he was in the deep green thicket by the river, a mile before the wagon track came to Garton. He relieved the ponies of their harness and let them eat of the grasses which were green on the river bank. He changed his clothes and donned the scarlet tunic which he would have to wear in making the arrest; then he made his fire and sat down to his midday meal. Through inquiry he had learned that from this point no trail came more quickly into Garton than the wagon track. Unless the Indian boy had seen him



swinging down the wagon track at the best speed of his ponies, he would perhaps feel that he could reach Garton before MacKenzie could spur Kettering to action. To do so he would follow this wagon trail—There was no one in the world to know how full was the boy's heart to save Red Angus in his dire peril; only MacKenzie guessed it as he watched the trail.

"After he had eaten, he lit his pipe and sat for a long twenty minutes while the flies droned and the trout leaped in the water. It was then that White Arrow came down the wagon track. He ran at a heavy dog trot, and it was plain that he was all but spent. He had somewhere thrown off his shirt so that he was stripped to the waist. His brown body was streaming with perspiration, and as he panted in great striving gasps, it glistened in the sunlight. His lips were strained back, revealing his shining teeth, and his legs moved mechanically, but more and more heavily with each step. Great determination shone in his brown eyes with a sort of frightened fire.

"He was sore spent, nearly done; otherwise his quick forest instinct would have sensed MacKenzie, or he would have caught some glimpse of the scarlet coat, and sought refuge in the brush. As it was, MacKenzie was upon him and had grasped him by the arm before he was aware of the redcoat's presence.

"Without a cry, but gasping and sobbing pitiably for the breath he could not get, the splendid little animal



fought like a wildcat. His supple, muscular body seemed elastic in MacKenzie's grasp, and the film of perspiration which bathed him made him slippery. He twisted and squirmed in wild action from every hold MacKenzie could get. He kicked and bit and scratched, taking in return many scratches and cuts from MacKenzie's metal accoutrement. And always MacKenzie could feel the boy's heart pounding madly under his glistening skin. And always there were the great gasping sobs. Then, abruptly, with a terrible futile striving for breath, the boy collapsed and MacKenzie found himself bearing a limp, insensible body in his arms.

"Now tenderly he bore his burden to the riverside, and laid him on the long grass. The heart, weary of its pounding, was beating more quietly now, and the slim body hardly moved with breathing. MacKenzie worked for some time with the means of artificial respiration to restore the boy to consciousness. And he worked, lost in wonder and admiration at the boy's good faith and sacrifice for the man he had chosen to follow.

"When White Arrow came to, he strove to rise, but found himself weak. He spoke plaintively, and a strange man came and looked in his eyes with a new look.

"The man spoke.

"'Nay, y' puir wee laddie, lie still a wee; ye're sore spent yet.'



"And behold, the voice was a new voice! The voice and the look each bore something which White Arrow had never known. The contrition of the strong who have hurt the weak. The admiration a brave man has for bravery. The love a strong man has for a boy. All these came to White Arrow for the first time in his life, in MacKenzie's look and in his speech; and the Indian boy went to sleep feeling like a tiny papoose wanting his mother. He did not know that he was bathed and rolled up in clean blankets while he slept, nor did he know that, this tender office done, MacKenzie took the wagon track to Garton and made straight for the 'Maple Leaf.'

"The 'Maple Leaf' was Garton's only hotel, and MacKenzie knowing his man, felt certain of finding him here in a room behind the bar-room where the idle inhabitants of Garton congregated to play cards.

"He felt reasonably certain of what his reception would be. The Mounted Police had no authority here. He strode very determinedly to the back door which opened into his room, and entered.

"Within there was a noisy crowd of ruffians profanely pursuing their pastimes in a haze of poisonous tobacco smoke. When the door opened, and the red-coat appeared, a deathly silence fell. MacKenzie walked deliberately up to the table where Red Angus sat playing cards and spoke the proper words of ar-



rest, warning Angus that whatever he might say would be used against him.

“Angus turned livid white, and then a deep crimson red. He rose silently and towered over the redcoat who gazed at him with unflinching blue eyes; and all the ruffians who filled the room gazed at Angus, too, waiting to take their cue from him. It seemed a long minute that he stood there, dominating the room. In fact it was a mere second. Then he moved forward like a panther, pouncing upon his opponent. But MacKenzie moved quickly, too. There was a great noise as every man in the room rose as one, and crowded forward—the wolf pack at the kill.

“MacKenzie picked up a heavy timber chair, swept a circle around him with it, and met Angus’ attack with the four legs. Some one drew a pistol and fired at him, but MacKenzie struck with the chair and the man went down. That gave Angus an opening, and, leaping in, he picked up MacKenzie like a child and flung him down, chair and all. The crowd was thick though, and MacKenzie was merely bruised against a table. With the assistance of this table he struggled to his feet and sought Angus—but Angus needed no seeking. He came, scattering the burly lumbermen, who were kicking viciously at MacKenzie’s body as he struggled to regain his feet. He reached MacKenzie only to find himself facing a large caliber revolver,



MacKenzie had managed to draw, and leaned against the table with his gun steadily prepared.

“A chair of heavy timber came hurtling across the table from behind him. It struck MacKenzie’s arm, fracturing it above the wrist, and the revolver clattered to the floor as Angus seized the redcoat’s throat and bent him back onto the table. Then the table collapsed, and MacKenzie fell again to the floor. Angus staggered forward over him and with a quick movement MacKenzie arose. In his left hand he held the table leg, a formidable weapon, and as several men reached for the gun, he lay upon them with it. One man fell like an ox, another stumbled over a table, his streaming head buried in his arms. Angus now seized this weapon from behind him, and MacKenzie had six or eight men fall upon him, and come between them. He bore up under these for a moment. They were too massed to do more than strike him occasionally in the face and, like a crowd of schoolboys, try to pull him down. Once they brought him to his knees and blows rained upon his head. He knew that to go down under those caulked boots was certain death and, with superhuman strength, he regained his feet. He was bleeding now from many wounds and his right arm was broken and useless. His legs were terribly bruised, and in one thigh was a knife wound. Then when his back was to a table and his foes thick upon him, Red Angus came back to the fray.



“With a roar he flung himself upon the crowd surrounding MacKenzie and the policeman was hurled with terrific force against the table. With a sickening pain he felt his ribs give way and the breath was forced from his lungs. He sent his fist driving into the face of his nearest opponent and then went down. Hardly conscious, he wriggled under the table until his head and chest were protected by chair and table legs. But the rest of his body was kicked frightfully by the cruel caulked boots; bruised by toe and heel and torn by the great nails. In frantic rage they strove to get his body out and at their mercy. But Red Angus interfered.

“‘Don’t kill him, you swine!’ he cried. ‘He fought well!’ And, hurling the ruffians aside, he picked up the unconscious redcoat, carried the body to the door which he kicked open, and then, as though it was some sort of refuse, he threw the thing away. It dropped like a sack on the grass; and like a sack it lay, the flies gathering around it.—

“When White Arrow, the Indian boy, awoke, the soft light of late afternoon had replaced the glare which vanished with the sun. And quiet was in camp and on the woods about him. He felt quite fresh, but his legs ached and were heavy; also, he had a sharp pain in his throat and his chest hurt when he breathed. He found that he was quite naked, and very hot and damp. So he made his way to the stream, and weakly



stumbled into it. After splashing about in the water he felt better. Then he remembered his mission, and the redcoat. He knew he was too late to warn Red Angus, but in some way, Red Angus seemed smaller and more ordinary now. Another man had come to him, with a kind voice and blue eyes which had suffered with his suffering. He felt afraid of what Angus might do to this man. He knew the ways of Angus and of his friends. So, White Arrow slipped into the corduroy trousers and resumed his way to Garton.

“Before he came to the town, he approached a field, and here leaning against the fence was a man. He was a terrible, beaten man. His face was bruised and cut, stained horribly with blood and dirt. His scarlet tunic, stained with a deeper red, was torn and dirty; and the torn white clothes beneath were stained as well. One arm hung helpless, and the other was pressed against his side. The face was drawn with pain, the lips pressed close; but the indomitable blue eyes showed no pain or self-pity. In them was only a fight against physical weakness; a relentless command to his broken body to ‘carry on.’ The boy moved by him slowly, regarding him with wide brown eyes.

“The man returned his gaze, and I think his stern eyes became softer and a little troubled.

“‘Dinna ye go, laddie,’ he said. The boy stood and stared a moment. He had not meant to go back to Angus. Now he felt glad.



“He walked up to the stricken man, and, standing at his left side so that the unbroken arm could rest upon his shoulder, he guided him from the fence to the road. With never a word and not a sound, they made their way in the twilight to the nook by the riverside.

“Now it was the boy who played nurse. He bathed MacKenzie’s wounds and bound them up. He cut a splint for the broken arm and strove to ease the broken ribs. The fine, well-knit body was sorely bruised and cut. Each cut the boy nursed faithfully under MacKenzie’s guidance and made for the man a bed of balsam boughs. Leaving him there, rolled in warm blankets, he made a fire, preparing an evening meal; then in the waning light, he took the ‘house maid’ from MacKenzie’s pack and started to mend the torn clothes. With only scorn for his own suffering, the Scotchman sat in his blankets, leaning against a friendly tree, and smoked, gazing at the boy. Gradually night fell, and throwing off his blankets, MacKenzie demanded his clothes. The boy looked at him with troubled eyes, fearing delirium; but MacKenzie’s eyes were sane enough, although they were lit with a great resolve. Again he demanded his clothes and, after futile protest, the boy helped him put them on. The riding breeches, clumsily patched and mended, the heavy brown boots, a clean shirt, and the only other tunic of khaki in place of the torn scarlet one. With an occasional groan between tight-closed lips, the man donned them all; and



the boy helped with almost a woman's tenderness.

"After this ordeal MacKenzie relaxed with clenched teeth at the fireside. Leaning back once more against the tree, he stared moodily into the blaze, while the boy sat opposite with troubled eyes.

"Now night with all its black darkness came upon them. No moon was out; only an occasional star, vagrant among summer clouds. If the stars could have seen through the screening trees, they would have gazed all night upon a very remarkable scene.

"There was the fire, burning red and flickering as the breeze passed through it. Beside it sat the boy, his naked shoulders covered by a blanket. He moved only to keep the fire alive. His eyes were fixed on the figure which caught the fire's light opposite him. Here was MacKenzie broken and tortured as he was, kneeling, supported by a broken tree—and praying.

"All night the fire glowed and all night the savage boy stared in wonder at this man who, all through the night, prayed. Not for ease from pain nor for safety from his wounds, but for strength to continue in his work. To suffer more.

"Sometimes his face would fall on his bended arm; he seemed to sleep. Then up he would bring his head, and in the rolling, sonorous accents of the Scotch exhorter, he would pray.

"At last toward morning, indeed after the east has already turned green-gray, he really slept. The Indian



boy crept forward, and covered the form with a blanket, not daring to move the bruised body. He leaned over MacKenzie for a little while, seeking the swollen, bruised face as it showed in the firelight. Then he lightly touched the sleeper's shoulder and withdrew to his own blankets.

"The sun was up when MaKenzie awoke and, waking, cried out with pain. This awakened White Arrow, who sprang to the Scotchman's side. MacKenzie smiled a grim smile which the boy answered quickly. Then into the man's eyes came the relentless determination of the night before. With a few mutterings he made his way to his old place beside the fire, sitting there while the boy prepared the breakfast. Silently they ate, and then, White Arrow assisting him, MacKenzie arose and made his way to the buckboard.

"'Break camp!' he said; then added, 'Laddie.'

"Silently the boy obeyed. The ponies must be hitched and the duffle packed on the buckboard. MacKenzie then spurred himself to the ordeal of clambering onto the buckboard; this accomplished, leaving him white, and with damp forehead, the boy was bidden to drive to Garton.

"He did so with dread in his heart and the cold dread increased as they neared the settlement. MacKenzie trusted that Angus might still be there; the boy prayed that he might not.

"At the 'Maple Leaf' the buckboard stopped, and



there was the painful ordeal of getting down. MacKenzie, very slowly, with a few necessary pauses, made his way to the same back door; and leaving White Arrow there, with a pair of glistening manacles, he opened the door and entered.

"As before the men were gathered about the tables in a blue haze of smoke; and just as it happened before, a deathly silence fell when MacKenzie appeared. And there was Red Angus.

"MacKenzie slowly crossed the room to the table where Angus stood. Angus rose suddenly to his feet and then there came the great clatter of all men rising, too. The room seemed crowded with the rough figures who stood up. MacKenzie advanced till he stood leaning with his unbroken arm upon a chair at the table opposite Angus. He was white as death is white, and his eyes burned with an intolerable fire. When he spoke, his voice rang out in the still room with a vibrant, clarion sound.

"'In the name o' the Queen, I arrest ye, Angus Wherrit, for the murder of David Carol. And I warn ye that anything ye may say will be used against ye.'

"There followed a deathly silence. Angus turned horribly pale and the crowd, like a wolf pack, shuffled a little, making the circle smaller.

"Then in a small voice, almost a tremulous mutter, Angus spoke.



“‘A’right, constable,’ he said, ‘c’mon.’ And his eyes seeking the floor, he shuffled around the table and stood at MacKenzie’s side. MacKenzie swept the circling pack with his glance, and they, seeming to see in his deep-set eyes what Angus must have seen, stepped back. With Angus he made his way, through the lane they formed, slowly to the door.

“Once outside he gave a curt command and Angus held forth his hands. Then came White Arrow and slipped over the great wrists the manacles he bore. In a sort of futile seeking the man’s eyes sought the boy’s; but he found there nothing—only the blank stare of the red Indian——

“You know, I think that afterwards—after Angus was tried and sentenced and hung—after MacKenzie left the hospital and White Arrow lived at the Post with him—I think that the Indian boy must have remembered that look which Angus gave him. And if he did, I believe he rejoiced at his freedom from the power of it. It was powerless to call him back.

“Of course that is only a thought on my part—I don’t know.”

There followed a pause while the rapids murmured on their way.

“Is that the end?” asked Eddie Adams.

“That,” said Renfrew, “is the end.”



## CHAPTER VII

### ONE WHO RODE ALONE

"You know," said Renfrew, "one of the greatest temptations in life is to follow the crowd."

He looked across the fire at the boys and grinned.

"I say that as if I'd made a great discovery, don't I?" he said, laughing. "And, of course, you all know it already. But there it is nevertheless."

The explorers were camped on a high bank of the river and breathed the scent of evergreen needles with every breath they took. The wind made the water fitful and the trees talked in an incessant sing-song, cracking their boughs together.

That night, since supper, there had been heated debate, and it was no strange thing. Renfrew seemed to enjoy the sounds of such discussions and would sit puffing quietly at his pipe while he listened, ready with a quick support for any argument which he felt held good. So, many evenings had been passed. Lengthy discussions of the trail, long talks on map reading, compass bearing, cooking, building, woodcraft and the



reading of the stars. There had been moonlight swims, and even some evenings which had found the explorers too tired after a day of coping with the turbulent Marapo to do anything but sleep.

On this night, however, heated debate had filled the evening, and it had come to this.

"The crudest example," said Renfrew, hot upon the trail of a thought, "is panic—a fear-maddened mob. Every man feels a contempt for that sort of thing, and we like to feel that under any circumstances we should never lose our heads, that we would keep cool. But—" and he looked at his companions keenly, "how about the more common examples? The men who sacrifice ideals and aspirations for the money-making job? Men who would rather build fortunes than manhood? Boys who leave school to follow the crowd into factories and offices? Youngsters who follow willy nilly whatever rotten things the gang may do, or say, or think.

"Hunting with the pack! Playing the wolf cub where manhood is the issue.—Understand what I mean?"

A little silence followed, all the boys understanding very clearly. Alan, hugging his knees, broke it.

"I think I know," he said honestly. "Sometimes I feel mad at myself because I do something just because all the other fellows do it. You want to kick yourself afterward."



Renfrew nodded gravely to the fire.

"We'd have no United States if Washington and the rest had hunted with the pack," said Renfrew.

He sat reflecting, while the trees mourned and the water lapped in a companionable way. The firelight shone on the trees—they seemed a golden lacework. Renfrew turned to the boys apologetically.

"I'll tell you a story," he said.

"Me-tah-nic was chief of a branch of the Cree nation," Renfrew began. "And he was old. Also, he was wise; and, having roamed the forest trails before the white man and the redcoat had come out of the East, he was especially wise in the ways of the white man. But he was old.

"Micheal Noud was an Indian agent, and had gained his position by wile and black favor. He was dishonest and robbed his Indian wards with great impartiality.

"Indians, though, follow a certain code of honesty. The wilderness life enforces it. They had no locks nor keys in the wilderness. So there came a time when Me-tah-nic and his Crees lost respect for the white man Noud, and Noud was foolish enough to be blind to the serious danger of such a happening. After some particularly grievous act of dishonesty, which had been quite transparent to the impassive Indian who suffered by it, a solemn party of young men came to the lodge of Me-tah-nic, and took counsel with him.



## ONE WHO RODE ALONE

---

“ ‘This white man is a great pig,’ said Teh-nah-gat, who was the son of a chieftain, and would in due time come into the headdress of Me-tah-nic. ‘He is a great pig, and has by his unclean dealings taken from Mantowac three milch cows which were to come to him from the Great White Father.’ (In this manner he referred to the King of England.) ‘He is a great pig,’ said Teh-nah-gat, ‘and is it not fitting that we should slay him?’

“Now the old chieftain had been waiting for this moment long days, and it distressed him very much, for, as I have said, he knew the ways of the white men and knew well where such an act as this would lead.

“ ‘Teh-nah-gat speaks with the mouth of a child, and a foolish child,’ he said with engaging frankness. ‘I, who am your chief, have dealt with the white men while many summers have passed, and from before the days when the buffalo herds were black upon the prairie. If this man is killed, the redcoats will come, and he who made the killing will be taken to the white man’s lodge, and will be hanged until the breath is gone from his body. What is to be gained for our people if this man dies, and two or three, or four of our braves are made to hang for it in the white man’s lodge? I have spoken.’

“ ‘We will kill this man, who is a great pig,’ said Teh-nah-gat. ‘And when the redcoats come, we will



slay them, too; so that in this manner none of us shall hang for the killing of Noud. He is a great pig.'

"'Teh-nah-gat speaks with a vacant mind. His mouth is as the mouth of a papoose, and a great wind comes out from it,' the old chief replied. 'If this man is killed, lo, two redcoats will come; if those two redcoats are killed, four will come to avenge them; and if these are slain, there will come a great number of redcoats with guns which shatter the earth under their enemies. Great numbers will come which will be uncountable even as the leaves on the trees in the heat of the summer, and our teepees will be burned, and our cattle taken; our children will be taken from us and our young men slain in battle. We will lose all our lands and be cast out of our hunting grounds—all of us who do not hang at Regina. Is it fitting that all this should come upon us because of the unwise practice of a fool? I have spoken.'

"And that is all the satisfaction the young men got from old Me-tah-nic. But they didn't believe him. Were they children to be frightened by the threat of armed men? Were they squaws? And as for the tales of redcoats coming like the leaves of the trees in summer, this was plainly a fabrication to put fear in their hearts. They knew that the redcoats were only two in number, and as far as leaves in the summer, there were not that many white men in the world. Besides



## ONE WHO RODE ALONE

---

there was the matter of Mantowac's milch cows, and the white man, Noud, who was a pig.

So the young men took counsel with one another, and afterward held a war dance. Me-tah-nic, hearing it, and knowing well what it meant, went down to the cabin of the fool, Noud, and warned him. Noud, in yellow fear, told Me-tah-nic that if he were killed, Me-tah-nic would surely hang; then believing from the gravity in the old man's face that he was effectively scared, Noud felt a great deal safer. At this point Teh-nah-gat and the young men arrived at the cabin, and they took Noud out and nailed him to the door like a stretched skin. Me-tah-nic watched them do this in dismay. He felt no pity for the wretched white man, but he loved his people, and in this, saw their end.

" 'This is a bad thing,' he said. 'Behold, I, Me-tah-nic, am your chief no longer.' And so it was.

"The young men nailed Noud to his cabin door, and then set fire to the cabin. Then they danced about the blaze while Noud was killed by it, and they were dancing when the morning came.

"In due time an account of all this reached Regina, which is the headquarters of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, and Regina sent the story on to Athabasca Landing with instructions to investigate. Saunders, Divisional Commander at Athabasca Landing, 'referred it' to Corporal West at Peace River.

"It was in that manner that I got in touch with the



story. As it happened I was nearly thrown into it bodily, neck and crop; but an accident prevented my seeing it through."

Renfrew rose, walked over to the fire and kicked a log which was escaping the flame, pushing it deeply into the glowing embers.

"My luck," he said with a grin at the flying sparks. "Dandy adventure. And there was I with my leg up on a chair at Fort Simpson. Oh, well—" He resumed his seat beside Alan at the fireside.

"As soon as West received the instructions 'to investigate' from Athabasca Landing, he made plans for the journey. There were not many men to choose from at Peace River just then. We had trouble getting an Indian for the pack animals, I remember. But we got our party together and set out about the beginning of October; West and me, and the Indian (Andy Lou was the Indian's name).

"When we rode out, the tang of the North was already in the air, and the nights were cold. We set our course to the northwest, aiming for the point where the Hay River rolls down to the foothills of the Rockies. From there we could make our way across the northeast corner of British Columbia, passing through old Fort Liard, then up the River au Liard, which you will probably find marked on your maps as the Mountain River, until, far to the north, a hundred miles



## ONE WHO RODE ALONE

---

south of Fort Simpson, we planned to turn west to the Rockies where Me-tah-nic lived with his people.

"It is a long, splendid trek, through the most beautiful country in the world, with all the splendors of camp life accompanying the ride, and the best of company, and the finest of mounts to make the journey with.

"At first, as we rode through the black pine country, following trails through the woods which wound along the river sides, we saw the mountains from a distance. They were so far removed that the foot of them was lost to sight in the mists of the horizon; only high in the sky, their snow-clad peaks caught the sun, and thus delicately sketched against the blue, they were like a phantom range, or one carved from mother-of-pearl.

"We rode and camped together for several splendid days, till the base of the mountains was reached, and those pearl-tinted peaks towered above us, making us very small. The air is like wine in the Rocky Mountains and those lofty crags, extending from the timber-covered base, always fill me with a desire to climb to their very heights and throw up my arms at the unattainable blue spaces which surround them, and breathe deep.

"The valleys below through which we passed were now vividly colored with the flaming hues of foliage as in mid-autumn. Hues which seem to be more vivid as one goes farther north. The very nearness of that



earthly beauty which surrounded us and made every movement the source of some new delightful aspect, of brilliant color, seemed to make those towering peaks more unearthly and farther removed.

"I mention all this so that you may get an idea of the scenic setting of what happened afterward—after I left the stage.

"Soon after we left the River au Liard behind, an accident befell me, and this accident put me out of the running. We were making our way down a steep slope, the floor of which was rough shingle, broken rock, into which the feet of our horses sank to the ankles; and here my poor beastie stumbled and lost its footing, so that it fell and rolled down the slope with me beneath it. At the bottom of the slope the horse regained its feet, but I didn't. I found that my left ankle was pretty badly broken.

"Of course that was a pretty kettle of fish and I felt a deep, rich blue by the time West got me back to Fort Simpson. The ankle hurt abominably, and although we traveled slowly it was a miserable journey. About one hundred and fifty miles which we made in five or six days.

"Fort Simpson is an old post of the Hudson's Bay Company. There is a store there, a mission and a collection of cabins. Hunters and trappers mostly. West found me a place with the old post doctor, and left me there to continue the 'investigation' alone. Of



course this 'investigation' was to be a matter of finding out whether the crime had been committed and if it had been, of bringing the murderers to justice. Since the Indian country in question had hardly been trodden by a white man, except for the agent and an occasional trapper, a pretty exciting experience was to be expected by the 'investigator,' and I felt loath to let West go on alone. But it must be so. The duty must be done while the trail of the crime was still fresh, and I was good for at least a month on my back. So West went on with Andy Lou and the horses.

"Long days I lay there at Fort Simpson while the old doctor came and put me to the torture two or three times a week. Soon after West left a prospector and his son came down from the Rockies and they had a tale to tell which interested me.

"It seemed they had fallen in with a number of Indians—Sicannies—and these had told them of Noud's horrible fate. The Sicannies are a suspicious crowd and have little to do with white men; also for very good tribal reasons (they are poor fighters) they mingle very little with Me-tah-nic's warriors. But in some way they had heard the story and eagerly passed it on. They added to it the news that Teh-nah-gat had taken the leadership completely away from the old chieftain and had danced many war dances with his braves to keep firm a resolution they had made that



all white men—especially redcoats, would be slain directly they entered the Indian territory.

“Of course this filled me with forebodings of the danger into which West was riding all alone. What if they slew him as they had slain Noud. But I was helpless to follow, and the doctor grilled me mercilessly when I suggested doing so in a day or so.

“Meanwhile West faced the mountains you may be sure, with a firm heart and a high resolve, and you can picture his scarlet coat shining brightly in the autumn sunlight, and in the vivid coloring of the woods, as he cantered along the trail. It was somewhere along this trail that he met a party of Indians, and these told him the same story which the Sicannies had imparted to the prospectors. Teh-nah-gat was on the warpath. To continue on his quest meant death. The same kind of death which Noud had suffered.

“West thanked the Indians and gave them a gift at parting. Then he continued his journey as though the warning had not been spoken. But Andy Lou followed him reluctantly.

“So they came to a pass in the mountains, and West knew that he was at the door of Meh-tah-nic’s country. It was here that Andy Lou lost heart. Nothing would persuade him to ride farther. West laughed at him for a man with the heart of a squaw, and he took one pack horse and rode on alone.

“Andy Lou looked after him till his scarlet coat was



lost in the flaming foliage; then, in sorrow at the white man's foolishness, and in worshipful admiration, too, he made camp and waited for whatever might befall.

"Before West entered the pass he made sure that his carbine was ready and his revolver loaded, and at hand, for, from this point onward he knew he would be watched by silent and invisible spies; as he rode in the daylight, as he camped by the wayside, as he sat by his fires, and as he slept, the tireless vigil was kept. A false move on his part might at any moment bring him death from the rifle of an unseen Indian, and he knew that he rode with death in the sunlit valley. Yet he made no sign that he was aware of the silent watchers; he rode and he camped as he would have ridden for pleasure in the forest; and at night, with quiet nerves, he slept.

"When he arose in the early morning, he became aware of an Indian sitting at his fireside as still as the trunk of the pines. As he made his careful preparations for the day, the Indian sat silent, and it was not until West was shaven and dressed that they greeted one another with great gravity. This required some ceremony. First West sat silently beside the Indian and lit a pipe. He puffed it for a few moments and then passed it to the Indian who in his turn puffed silently, and then handed it back. Then the Indian spoke.

" 'I am Me-tah-nic,' said he gravely.



" 'My name,' said the redcoat, 'is West.'

" 'My white brother rides alone,' remarked the chief.

" 'He who rode with me was wounded when his horse fell,' replied West with honest candor. 'I left him at Fort Simpson, and am here alone. Why comes my brother to my camp fire?'

"For a moment the old Indian sat silently, choosing his words. 'The white man, Noud, whom the Great White Father, in his wisdom sent to speak for him among my people,' he said at last, 'was a bad man. He knew not the ways of the redcoats. He robbed my people.'

"Another pause, while the coffee-pot steamed on the fire.

"Me-tah-nic continued. 'He was a great pig,' said Me-tah-nic. 'And, therefore, I, Meh-tah-nic, slew him. I nailed him to the door of his cabin, and I set fire to the cabin, so that he was killed.'

" 'Me-tah-nic was not well advised,' said West dryly.

" 'Me-tah-nic was a great fool,' agreed the old Indian. 'But the man is not master of his spirit, when the Evil One works within him and commands him to do wrong.'

" 'Aye,' said West.

" 'The young braves of my tribe are very loyal to me,' said Me-tah-nic. 'They have sworn to slay the redcoats who come to take me for this evil deed, but I am wise in the way of the white man, and I know that



## ONE WHO RODE ALONE

---

if my brother is slain it will assuredly bring vengeance upon my people, for are not the redcoats many as the leaves upon the trees in the summer? Behold, Me-tah-nic is here! Go no further on your mission, lest my people kill you, and harm befall them thereby. I give myself up to you, white brother. Take me with you to Regina, that I may answer for my crime.'

"West had watched Me-tah-nic keenly while he spoke, and although the old man betrayed nothing in his expression or his voice, he knew that the Indian lied.

"'My brother Me-tah-nic tells me that he knows the ways of the white man,' West said with great firmness. 'Then he knows it is not our way to stop short of a deed half done. Death may await me in your country, yet you know I must go there to find the slayer of Noud. You are a man, indeed, Me-tah-nic, and worthy to be the great chieftain which you are. For I know that you come to give yourself up to be hanged for your people's good; yet you never committed this crime. I must go forward and learn who it is that did this thing, and him I must take back with me if the Great Spirit commands that I may do so.'

"Me-tah-nic spoke. The honest praise of his brave act had touched his heart, and he began at that moment to worship at the feet of this white man who faced death with such firm calmness. It is such cool bravery as West showed then, that has made the work of the



Mounted Police so lasting in its effect upon the Indians.

“ ‘My brother has called Me-tah-nic a man indeed,’ the Indian said. ‘Yet in all my life, though it has seen many battles and great numbers slain, never have I met with such a man as you, who ride into death, as a young brave goes forth to the hunt. But you will not go alone, for I shall ride beside you and my braves may yet have enough love for me, who was their chieftain, to forbear to kill you at my side.’

“ ‘Me-tah-nic speaks with a great heart,’ said West, then. ‘And so it shall be. We will ride together.’

“So after the morning meal was finished, and the camp was broken, the two set out, side by side, each with a vast respect for the other, each keeping a solemn silence. Yet, you know both those men were filled with joy at the adventure, and they urged their horses over the mountain trails with the thrill of it in their hearts.

“Always as they rode, they were watched; their every move was marked, almost every word they said was heard. Had either betrayed fear, or had they planned the slightest treachery, they would never have seen the Indians who would have killed them. As it was they rode forward with impassive faces, and only exchanged the most commonplace remarks of camp life.

“On the second day they came upon isolated lodges



in the forest. These were the camps of hunters who lived on the village outskirts, and they rode by them in silence. The Indians who watched them pass were silent, too; but no sooner were the redcoat and his strange companion hidden from sight than these Indians disappeared into the woods to give news of their coming to the village. This was scarcely necessary, for, from a day before West had entered the reservation, runners had been streaming in, giving reports of every movement he made. It was as Me-tah-nic had said; only the presence of the old Chief at his side had prevented him from dying in some sudden ambush on the trail.

"When they reached the village everything was prepared for their coming. A war dance had been held the night before, and the women and children had been sent away into the mountains. Every brave had his rifle loaded, and at hand. The ponies were loose in the village and equipped for riding. Also, a sinister omen, all was ready for a sudden breaking of camp.

"West and Me-tah-nic rode directly into the village and reined in at the center of a circle of Indians who sat silently on the ground and stared at them. They appeared as though waiting for the redcoat to perform some tricks for them; but every brave had a loaded rifle ready on his knees, and awaited only the signal from Teh-nah-gat for the pleasurable excitement of slaying this white man, too. West seemed utterly ignorant of the presence of these silent red men. His



revolver was strapped in its holster, and his carbine was in its sheath at his knee. As he rode into the circle his mission seemed the most peaceful one in all the world. But beneath his calm his heart beat fast, and he was very alert. It was a desperate game which he played; his nearest help was two hundred miles away. He sat alone on his great bay mare, and dominated the savages by his very loneliness.

“‘Who is your leader?’ he said crisply.

“‘Teh-nah-gat stepped forth, and standing at the head of West’s horse, he looked insolently up at him. West recognized the insolence in the look, and saw that his task was to be hard. Teh-nah-gat was intoxicated with power, and had respect for no authority.

“‘I am Teh-nah-gat,’ cried the Indian. ‘I am the chieftain of these people,’ and he beat upon his chest with a great deal of dishonest pride.

“‘West looked down upon the savage with cold eyes.

“‘Teh-nah-gat speaks with the lying mouth,’ he said. ‘For this is your chief, Me-tah-nic; and you can have no other.’

“‘The face of the young Indian darkened at that, and turning to his followers, he shouted a signal. Immediately a number of Indians leaped to their saddles, seeming to spring from the ground directly onto the backs of their ponies. They moved like lightning, and came bounding over the open ground toward West. West watched them come without moving a muscle.



He acted as though he was confident that they meant no harm, which was a very brave attitude, indeed. But he was facing one of those crises which come to every man in a lifetime—that moment when it is most dangerous to be afraid. West showed no fear, nor did he lose his head; as a direct result of which the Indian bluff was called. They merely rode up to him in an endeavor to separate him from Me-tah-nic, waving their rifles in the air with shrill cries, and jostling his horse with their ponies. With a steady hand he kept his place beside the chief, and his great bay horse stood like a rock against the slight ponies of the Indians. Always he ignored the jeering crowd, and kept his eyes intently on Teh-nah-gat. As the warriors jostled roughly against him, he spoke to the youthful rebel.

“‘Call back these braves, Teh-nah-gat! it is not fitting that a warrior play the part of a coyote, and harry the kill it cannot bring down! Call these warriors back, that they may sit in council with me as men who talk with men.’

“Teh-nah-gat was a savage, and the war dance which had made the death of Noud so sure a thing, was the beginning of a series of events which had set aflame the animal in his heart. West was no longer dealing with a man; he now had a wild beast to tame. Teh-nah-gat turned up his face, distorted with lust for blood, and made hideous with the war paint smeared upon it.



“‘They are the braves of Teh-nah-gat,’ cried the beast, as the Indians yelped more and more shrilly, hurling their ponies against West and brandishing their knives in his face. ‘You will never leave this place alive, redcoat! My braves will play with you as we played with the accursed Noud! We will kill, kill, kill, and your scalp will hang from the guide pole of my lodge.’

“The beast danced in a great frenzy, and the Indian horsemen began to ride in a dizzy serpentine about the white man. This was the way Custer saw the Indians ride before he died on the Little Big Horn, and many a white man has made his last desperate fight against such a dizzy, howling circle of savages as that. West knew that it was the beginning of a very rotten sort of end, and that only the chieftain at his side was the slim straw which kept that end away. He acted quickly, and with vast daring. He whipped a pair of manacles from his pocket, and threw himself with a headlong dive from his saddle upon the astonished Teh-nah-gat. Together they tumbled to the ground, and the amazed riders, who had confidently expected the end to start with rifle fire, slowed up to see this incredible thing.

“When West arose to his feet, he stood over a fuming, manacled prisoner. In the brief moment of that tussle, the entire situation was shattered and a new one made. The redcoat was now the master. He



leaped into his saddle, and as his prisoner arose to his feet, he threw a looped rope about his neck.

"Broken now was the frenzied circle of riders, and changed from dangerous savages to children, curious to see what this amazing white man would do next.

"West addressed them from his saddle. He told them with all the eloquence and ceremony which Indians love, of how Me-tah-nic had placed his head in the hangman's rope to save his people. He told them how much more faith he had put in the old Chief than they had. How, unwilling to believe that Me-tah-nic was the murderer, he had come to them, that they might reassure him that this was indeed so. He had known, he said, that they were determined to kill any redcoats who might come; yet rather than hang their Chief without a hearing he had risked almost certain death. 'Now, behold,' he cried. 'I will make Teh-nah-gat free, and you, my brothers, must decide who shall go back with me to face trial! I have taken my chance with the Evil Spirit within you, and have risked my life so that no one shall be punished save only those who did this thing. Judge, therefore, my brothers, who is to ride back with me. Is it your Chief, Me-tah-nic?'

"And, true to his word, he freed Teh-nah-gat from his bonds.

"For a time the young savage stood looking up at him, and at the statue on horseback which was Me-tah-



nic; then turning, he walked over to the circle of his tribesmen.

"They took counsel together in a chattering knot, while Me-tah-nic sat motionless, and West turned his eyes to a white mountain peak which towered over the vivid forest before him. He told me afterward that he felt never was a mountain so majestic and serene, never was an autumn day more clear, nor the clean thrill of life in the forest half so vigorous, as in this hour when he emerged from the shadow of death.

"Came Teh-nah-gat once more to his bridle, and the Indian's face no longer bore the look of the wild beast. It was now the earnest face of an intelligent child. Teh-nah-gat was followed by a little knot of braves who came forward and stood behind him.

"Behold!" said Teh-nah-gat. "We who stand here are the men who in the foolishness of our spirits slew the white man Noud. We took him from council with Me-tah-nic and nailed him to the door of his cabin; and we set fire to his cabin, so that like the pine tree in the heat of the dry season, he was consumed. Me-tah-nic is innocent of this deed. He stood in conclave against us, trying to turn us from our anger. But my mind was the mind of a papoose, and I led these men out to kill the white man Noud. We nailed him to the door of his cabin, and having nailed him there, as the hide of the buffalo is pegged on the ground for the wigwam, we set fire to the cabin, and so this white man



## ONE WHO RODE ALONE

---

died. He screamed like a trapped hare; he was a great pig. Now we will ride with you to the white man's lodge, for we know that the way you deal with us will be a just way.'

"Now Me-tah-nic took command of his braves again, and he bullied and belabored them with ceaseless chatter, as they prepared ponies and equipment for the journey of the braves who had surrendered.

And West rode back to Peace River with his prisoners who followed like children while the redcoat and Andy Lou who waited for him at the mouth of the pass kept ceaseless watch.

"That's your story! The story of the black scoundrel, contemptible fool, Noud; of the poor savage, Teh-nah-gat; and of Me-tah-nic, who refused to hunt with the pack.

"Of course there was West as well."

Again Renfrew rose and kicked the fire together.

"What happened to Teh-nah-gat," asked Eddie Adams.

"That was a good story," said Bub.

"Hanged him," said Renfrew shortly, struggling with a fiery log. Then, nipping in the bud other impending questions, he added: "The rest went to prison. Ghastly fate for a mountain Indian. I can see those mountains yet."



## CHAPTER VIII

### TRAVELING LIGHT

"It was about a patrol," said Billy Loomis. "You told us that a man named Fitz something had gone out with a whole patrol. You promised to tell us the story some day, and asked us to remind you of it."

They had come to the shores of a broad lake, and had made their camp upon it. The wooded boundaries sloped to a sandy beach and the waters rippled upon it in a friendly sort of manner. It was the end of the first part of their adventure. In the morning the explorers would leave their canoes on these sandy shores and climb the mountain behind them to find Lake Surprise.

Renfrew looked at Billy for a long time, puffing his pipe; remembering.

"It is a terrible story," he said finally. "And yet it is a splendid one, too. It is the most tragic thing which ever befell in the records of the Mounted Police. It was the result of one of those little, childish weaknesses which crop out in a man now and then. Yet it



symbolizes the splendor of the work which every explorer has done—Lewis and Clark, Livingstone, Columbus—all of them.

“But it is not a lecture I am to read you, is it? It is a story you want. I must leave you to draw your own conclusions as I did in the story of Red Angus, and you must choose the hero, too.

“It is Deming’s story in a way. It started with him, and in a very remarkable way he ended it. Deming was at that time Sergeant in Command at Fort Resolution, a Northern Frontier post on Great Slave Lake. He is a big, wholesome man with iron nerves and an irresistible will. He is not easily daunted.

“Fort Minto is a post about five hundred miles north of Resolution. It is near to the shore of Great Bear Lake, but that doesn’t mean anything to Minto since for barely four months in the year is Great Bear anything more than a desert of drifting snow and broken ice pack.

“Every winter it was Deming’s duty to send a patrol up to Fort Minto to keep in touch with the settlement there and with Sergeant Fitzherbert who from that distant post, held the peace of the land among the Esquimoux and Indians of the Arctic. Every winter Deming’s patrol drove up to Minto and back, following a trail over the mountains which only the Police and occasionally Indians used. It was a rough,



hard trail, over glacier and frozen river bed; but it was the straightest way.

"Now when Deming sent out this patrol he sent it loaded with a surplus of provisions, enough for a week or ten days more than the trip demanded; and he provided the party with shotguns and ammunition for them so that should food fail and no big game be found they could depend on a supply of small game. Having in mind the roughness of the trail and the bitterness of the elements which held sway over it, he took no chances. And every time the patrol arrived in Minto with its surplus of provisions and its unused guns and ammunition, Fitzherbert sent back good-humored, jesting messages reminding Deming that he had forgotten to provide hot-water bottles for his men, or foot warmers, or telling him that the patrol had arrived shamefully short of base-burning stoves.

"That is the sort of man Fitzherbert was. A little, resolute man, he had spent years traversing the barrens of the North. The adventures of hardship about which explorers after a carefully planned, long-prepared trip write books, were matters of every-day life to him. Year in and year out he invaded the unknown, he faced the irresistible, he broke the untrodden trail. He lived his life on snowshoes; he moved in the bleak danger of the untracked North every day, and he knew no warmth at night. The trail to Resolution was traveled every year. In Fitzherbert's mind it was a mo-



notonous highway, a simple jaunt ; so he jested at Deming's elaborate equipment for it, because he himself had trekked four hundred miles with a week's provisions, with four dogs, and alone—once.

“All this was before the Indian, Jacob, came down to Resolution and told Sergeant Deming his story.

“Deming had been expecting to see Fitzherbert that winter—it was the winter of 1912. In the previous spring he had received word from Regina instructing him to forego the usual patrol to Minto since Fitzherbert himself was to patrol from Minto to Resolution when the winter came. This was arranged so that the Commissioner at Regina could get in touch with Fitzherbert by wire. Fitzherbert, these instructions told Deming, would arrive at Resolution about the first of February. And February came and was nearly gone, when the Indian Jacob arrived at Resolution from the Minto trail and told Deming his story.

“Had he seen anything of Sergeant Fitzherbert on the trail? Deming asked him. Yes, he had. His camp had been on Portage Creek. Portage Creek on the other side of the divide. Sergeant Fitzherbert had come to him, up the creek, with a party. There were three others in the party. Three dog teams and four men—all redcoats. They hired him to guide them over to the Little Thunder River. He had done so and they paid him \$24. Then he returned to his camp. The white man's snowshoes were small snowshoes, Jacob



observed. His own snowshoes were longer. A foot longer and they were wider. He had hunted on the Elk River until now. The hunting was bad. Sergeant Fitzherbert should have arrived at Resolution four or five weeks ago.

"That was the story of Jacob, the Indian.

"Therefore, Deming knew that something had happened to Fitzherbert on the trail and he made ready with all the men and dogs at his disposal to set out for Minto and find out what the matter was back there on the trail. Fifield accompanied him, and Wheeler, both men who knew the North and had done good service with the Force. An Indian made the party four strong, and they took three dogteams; five dogs to a team.

"Now I must tell you something of the trail from Fort Resolution to Fort Minto; and you must listen carefully, because I am going to take you up that trail and back again, beating away from it up hidden creeks and rivers, crossing the bleak divide, and recrossing it; traveling with Deming and Fitzherbert in a torturing cold, and you must not lose your way.

"The trail was a matter of river beds. Glistening white roadways of snow covered ice walled by black evergreens and rugged banks. From the northern shore of Great Slave Lake it led up the Limestone River till one came to a spot where it nearly touched the Elk. Then portage, crossing rough ground till the



Elk River was reached. Then portage once more. This portage took one over the divide; that is, over the peak of the land on the other side of which the water flowed north. Over the divide the trail led, and a little way down the northern slope it ran into Wilderness Creek, a narrow, tortuous trail, often obscured by the straggling woods through which it wound. Down Wilderness Creek (being careful to keep to the bed of the stream), to where it joined the wide pathway of the Little Thunder River. Down the Little Thunder to its junction with the Thunder, and at this spot one must take care, for another stream, the Rain River, joined the Thunder here and the two icy pathways branched before one confusingly. If the wrong trail is chosen our provisions may fail, and cold death overtake us before the mistake is mended. One must choose carefully here, and follow unerringly the winding course of the Thunder River; and down the Thunder, into the Pool; down and down until Fort Minto is reached, and the Pool River tumbles into Great Bear Lake.

“From the story the Indian told, Deming knew that Fitzherbert had reached the Little Thunder River. Traveling in the opposite direction on the trail I have just described, he had evidently taken a short cut, in his expert resolute manner, following Portage Creek from Thunder River and having the Indian guide to take him from the head of that stream to Little Thunder River. From Little Thunder, of course, Deming



knew that Fitzherbert must have traveled up Wilderness Creek and crossed the divide—if he had continued.

“The weather was warm when Deming and his party started out, the thermometer playing about the zero mark, and the trail was good. Deming made all haste, bearing in mind the thing which underlay his mission, and he started swiftly for the divide. But Wheeler froze one foot. The river was badly flooded at first. Inches of water and slush lay on its icy surface. The weather was too warm—nearly as high as zero remember. All the party got their feet thoroughly wet. Then, on the upgrade, the water vanished and left them a floor of shining ice—with an upward slope. So they had to cut footholds in the ice, moving slowly, and the result was that Wheeler froze his foot. They all changed their moccasins and stockings, but although they beat and chafed Wheeler’s feet unmercifully, the pain of the frostbite lingered and he continued the bitter five-hundred-mile journey in severe suffering. This trouble of tilted, glassy floor and freezing moisture, made the journey up to the divide a stressful one. After a day of weighted toboggans pulled up the glacier side, and dogs carried up after footholds had been cut with axe and pick, all were tired and aching; and poor Wheeler groaned with his pain in the cold Arctic night. But somewhere on the trail a secret lay hidden—and that secret they had set out to find. There could be no rest or comfort for them till they had found it.



"They had ten hard days on the uptrail. Sometimes where the snow was deep in the gorges all the dogs were hitched to one toboggan and they fought a way through, and went back again three times for the others. Only for two days was it cold. Once 62 degrees below, then 50 degrees below, and on these two days a thick fog clung to the glacier and often they found themselves ankle deep in icy slush and water. On these occasions they paddled about in the water, Wheeler gritting his teeth with pain, until they could drag their loads to dry ice again. But they fought their way to the divide—and faced a gale.

"It was heavy work breaking trail over the soft snow of the pass at Elk Portage and when they struck the glacier on the other side of the divide a flood of thick water was there, and thin ice which sank beneath them. The gale, straight out of the north, made it bitterly cold, and it impeded them as well. They had to push against it, leaning forward. Now their real work began. The work of trail finding. To track Fitzherbert's party and read in his trail whatever could be gathered from it.

"About the middle of March—they were fourteen days out from Resolution—they came upon a day of thick fog, bitter cold, and the unabating gale. The patches of water on the ice of the Little Thunder River, for they had now come to the upper reaches of that stream, caught them unawares here and there, and



forced them to make for the banks. Thus their course was a painful zig-zag. Ziz-zagging in this manner they found an old trail, but it revealed nothing more than that some one had traveled south within the last two months. They set upon this trail, however, as keenly as a hunting pack, and their eager, trained eyes scanned all the river unhidden by the fog, from bank to bank as they followed it. The trail ran into water and disappeared. They split, so as to cover both banks, and met again on the other side of the water. Again they followed the shallow trail, losing it on the ice, finding it again on the bars in the river. Then the sign of a snowshoe stood out clear and well marked on the hardened snow, a peculiar thing. Deming put his own snowshoe over this mark. It overlapped it by almost a foot. Deming remembered the remark of Jacob, the Indian. 'Their snowshoes were small snowshoes.' So he knew that this was Fitzherbert's trail.

"He picked it up on Little Thunder River, and that was an important thing. Evidently Fitzherbert had not crossed the divide, for no trail had appeared on the slope of the opposite side. Besides, had Fitzherbert struck any other stream on the other side he must eventually have reached the Elk River where many Indian hunters camped in the wintertime, and these, returning to Resolution, would have reported him. Fitzherbert had not crossed the divide. Where, then, was he?



"The question kept Deming's persistent, plaintive company in the bitter, northern gale, beside his bleak camp fires, under the stars.

"Fitzherbert was too good a traveler to have left the river. He had not crossed the divide. His trail ended near the head of the Little Thunder. Where, then, was he?

"They came to the point where Little Thunder joined the Thunder River, and here the Rain River branched forth as well. The trail disappeared at this point in the roughness of the ice pack, snow and water-filled crevices. Deming, with the thought that Fitzherbert might have tried the Rain River by mistake, left the footsore Wheeler and Fifield to make camp in a clump of timber, and set out with the Indian to search the banks of the Rain. He zig-zagged up from bank to bank, beating his way into underbrush, and digging away drifted snow; but the examination yielded him nothing. He returned to the junction of the rivers, and seeing the camp-fire smoke of the rest of his party, he entered the thicket where they lay. He was tired out.

" 'Has this a familiar appearance, Sergeant?' asked Fifield, as Deming gratefully drank hot coffee. 'There is an old camp over yonder. We found this near it.'

"He held in the firelight a piece of a flour sack. It was marked in a corner with a broad arrow and the legend 'R.N.W.M. Police, Fort Minto.' So Deming, before eating or further rest, sought the site of the old



camp. It had been a night camp, as the marks of the sleepingbags showed. Several food tins lay about the fireplace. There was nothing more. Only this silent, desolate witness to the man who had disappeared.

"The next day was hard going. Drifted snow filled the river with sharp hillocks and crested waves. The snow was crusted and it cut the dogs' feet, or, breaking beneath the men's snowshoes, tripped them; and there was the bitter gale. Fitzherbert's trail was hidden here by drifted snow. But keen eyes kept watch on the banks and a break in the brush betrayed to them the site of another night camp. The mystery was deepened with this. This camp was barely four miles from the camp of the previous night. What, then, had held Fitzherbert back? Was one of his party injured?

"Deming thought it over as he pushed northward, into the gale, as he swept the banks eagerly with his eyes, as his dogs whined at the torturing snow's crust, as the toboggans spilled in the hollows. That day revealed nothing to them, the fog hung low over open water toward the end of the day. The trail did not reappear.

"The following day, however, revealed to them three more camps all within fifteen miles. Night camps close together. They must have traveled slowly, painfully. What was the burden which delayed them?

"The fog lifted that day, or rather the gale swept it behind them, and they saw the ice swept bare for the



first time. It was clear of the drifting snow, and only one thing marred its glistening, slippery surface. Near the river's edge a hard-packed trail stood out on the ice like a welt, and it bore the imprint of the short snowshoes. *They were pointed down river, into the north, toward Minto!*

"Deming pushed on, although the feet of man and beast as well, slipped on the glistening surface of the ice. Five miles below the last of Fitzherbert's camps they found another—a scant five miles. This was at 'Enoch's Tent,' an old hunting lodge where a stream called Peak Creek entered the Thunder River; and a vaguely marked trail wound away up the creek. They were tired and the day was near a close, but hot on the scent, they followed that trail. Six miles up the winding sheet of ice they came upon their first intelligible clew. Here was a little cabin, the remains of another camp, and cached in the cabin was a toboggan, seven sets of dog harness, and search revealed—bones. The shoulder blade and the legs of a dog. A dog which had been killed, and cooked, and eaten. Also there was a small quantity of dried fish in the cabin.

"So the night camps close together, and the snowshoes pointing northward were explained. Fitzherbert's patrol had returned. Some of those camps marked the outward journey. Others marked the journey back to Minto. And they were short of provisions, for they had killed a dog. Yet dried fish remained.



Perhaps the dog had died from hardship or accident, and they had made use of the flesh to conserve the food supply. Evidently they were well equipped for the return as they still must have two teams of dogs left, and the fish. Obviously they had returned to Minto. Deming felt relieved and glad. They must surely have made it. He had feared for them.

"Now Deming and his party urged their pace forward, keeping close to the vanishing trail. Finding it, losing it, backing and zig-zagging, they followed it. It revealed that Fitzherbert had kept to the open stream always. He had avoided rough portages which would have cut off miles from the river trail. He had followed Peak Creek till it nearly touched the river again, thus avoiding by a nine-mile detour a five-mile stretch of rough trekking through a gorge. This puzzled Deming. Had Fitzherbert been burdened with something hard to carry? A sick man or an injured one? This he thought must be the case.

"So they traveled for three more days, eagerly following Fitzherbert's tortuous trail which led them miles over rough foothills to avoid a mountain climb, and which was often obscured by the heavy drifted snow which made their progress difficult.

"At a point some sixty miles from Minto they came upon 'Campbell's Cabin.' This was a well-known landmark, the hunting lodge of a man who had spent every winter of his life trapping here. They camped



there, and in the morning, before they left, Deming discovered two packages perched on a beam of the cabin.

“‘What can old Campbell have cached up there?’ said Deming.

“‘Look and see,’ said Fifield, addressing the Indian. And the Indian climbed up and pulled the packages down.

“A mail bag stamped with the royal arms and (G. R.—George Rex) just as mail bags were stamped in London, or India, or Montreal. A symbol of civilization, an emblem of great cities and the comfort and luxury of them. On a beam in Campbell’s cabin. The other package was a dispatch bag fashioned of leather. That was stamped ‘R.N.W.M.P.’ A symbol of bitter struggle in the Wilderness; ever-present danger and privation to prepare the way and build such cities as London and Montreal are to-day.

“Fitzherbert had left these bags. It was obviously an effort to lighten his load, but he had not found it necessary to do this until he was barely two-days’ journey from Minto. Deming felt now that, whatever his burden, Fitzherbert must have made his goal.

“The morning after Deming and his party left Campbell’s cabin they found very little was left of the portage from the Thunder River to the Pool, so they hurried on, very tired of the bitter trail, and sore from the hardships of it. When they reached the Pool



River they would feel their journey over. Only forty-five miles or so and the warm cheer of hospitality at an open fireplace awaited them. The cheery hospitality of white men to white men in the far North. So they pushed on, keeping a sharp lookout for Fitzherbert's trail.

"Just before the land dropped away to the Pool they came upon a round, clear sheet of ice, a little lake, frozen and windswept. In the center of this lake, standing forth incongruously in all that howling wilderness was a pile of tent poles, some duffel and a cooking stove. Alone and desolate they lay with all the pathetic appeal of intimate, human articles left behind a departed owner. Very solemnly, as though removing the remains of some loved animal, the three white men carried these things to the side of the trail, examined them mutely, and took up their journey again.

"Deming wrote to me afterward and told me all this. He said that it was at this point he first feared what he was so soon to realize. . . .

"A little subdued, and with each man thinking his own thoughts, the party made its way to the Pool River and started the last stretch of the journey.

"They had proceeded down the river about three or four miles when they came upon another sign. There was a deep cut at this point and the banks of the river were quite high. The bank to their right was crowned with a thicket of spruce trees and further on, where



one end of the cut sloped to the river, a number of willow trees overhung the stream. Under these willows lay an abandoned toboggan with several sets of dog harness. A handkerchief was tied to a branch of a gaunt willow tree and a little trail led up the slope. Deming left the others at the riverside and clambered through the snow to the top of the bank. Here he found a small open camp. A fire had been there and a kettle was on the cold ashes. Many articles lay about where they had been dropped. A blunt and broken ax; a frying pan; some packages of matches. Close to the fire was piled high a mass of blankets, sleeping robes, and furs. Deming looked at the kettle. It was half full of moose skin, cut into pieces. It had been boiled—Deming approached the pile of robes and threw them off. One and two and three armsful of them, until he saw what lay beneath; what he had known would lay beneath when he first saw the pitiful encampment. He walked quietly to the edge of the bank and called to the men below.

“‘Fifield!’ he called, softly. ‘Wheeler! Come here.’”

“They came up the bank and followed him to the desolate fireplace. There, gravely, and with an infinite feeling of sorrow, they stood, looking upon the dead.

“The bodies of two men lay under those blankets.

“Deming knew one of them. It was Sheehan, a constable of the Minto Post. The other man Deming did not recognize, but Fifield identified him as Cart-



wright, another man of the Mounted Police. It was plain that they had both died of cold, hunger, and exhaustion. An examination of the two bodies revealed the burden which had held Fitzherbert back in his return journey. Constable Sheehan's feet had been so severely frozen that they were swollen to an unbelievable degree; and black, and cracked horribly. Signs about the camp showed that he must have crawled about on his hands and knees the last few days, or it is to be hoped, hours. For death must have been very welcome when it came to him. The expression of pain, of worn desolation, upon his face, indicated that.

"Deming mentioned this in his letter.

" 'You will remember Sheehan,' he wrote, 'in those happy days we had together at Peace River. He was such a wholesome, happy Irishman, with his curly, fair hair and his twinkling gray eyes. I used to think that he had kept in his big powerful body the soul of his childhood in Ireland. Do you remember the night when West played the old piano, and Sheehan stood with his back to the door of the cabin and sang those Irish songs? I can see him now with his face alight with mirth. And this was his end. Crawling on hands and knees, a gaunt skeleton of a man, swathed and padded with every heavy garment which he had. Crawling about, his face woefully drawn with pain, and gaunt with the hunger which led him to eat boiled moose skin; dragging those terrible feet behind him.'



“Finally, of course, he had crawled into the blankets, piled high the robes, he and Cartwright, and from that bed in the Northern wilds they had never risen. ‘Their knees were drawn up in pain,’ Deming wrote.

“Deming and the others made camp near this silent place. Under the blankets where the two had died, various papers had been found, and among these was Fitzherbert’s diary which held the story of his ill-fated trip. Deming read it at his camp fire.

“This point was about thirty-five miles from Minto and not a long day’s journey. So Deming still hoped for Fitzherbert and the other member of the party. In the morning they started out briskly after covering the bodies of the dead men. But the trail Fitzherbert had left was woefully light now. A straggling, narrow trail with many scattered places and many points where it disappeared entirely. Each time it disappeared, Deming’s heart sank, for he feared that it might be the end; but for ten miles it vanished and reappeared, vanished and reappeared again, the straggling trail of feeble and exhausted men.

“Then, ten miles from the camp of Sheehan and Cartwright, the trail ran into the bank and disappeared in a scuffle of frozen snow. Deming kicked about in the snow, seeking a clew, and a pair of broken snowshoes was revealed. On the bank was the trail of a man. The four men followed it—

“They came to the end of their search. An open



space where no camp had been made but where the remains of a fire lay. There were the same scattered utensils, but no pile of blankets. A little distance from one side of the fire, lay outstretched the body of a man. His arms had been folded across his breast, his face was covered with a cloth. The body appeared stiff and hard, singularly like the carved effigies of Crusaders which lie in old world churches. Across the remains of the fire lay another man. Fitzherbert himself, like a true leader, the last to lie down and rest. He lay on his back with one hand on his heart. His right arm was flung wide of the body. His blue eyes stared up at the sky. In his belt was a paper on which had been scrawled with charred wood, a message.

“ ‘All money in dispatch bag and bank, clothes, etc., I leave to my dearly beloved mother. God bless all.’

“His dearly beloved——”



## CHAPTER IX

### THE PRICE

So long did Renfrew sit staring into the fire, puffing at his pipe after recounting Deming's discovery and its sad consequences, that the Explorers, waiting breathlessly about the fire, wondered if he had more to tell.

Alan spoke quietly, softly, adjusting his voice to a repression which filled the air.

"Is that all?" he said.

Renfrew looked up at him and gazed into his face for a moment silently.

"I was thinking," he said.

"They covered these bodies. The four living men who had just made the journey, in attempting which these other four had died. Then they made their way on to the Fort. Two dog teams set out the following day and brought the bodies in. This was the first news Fort Minto had of the disaster. They had imagined Fitzherbert safely in Dawson. They had envied him and his party their visit to civilization. They expected him back.



"The Police at the post joined Deming in the work of making coffins and the following morning the four were buried in one grave, four coffins side by side. A firing party saluted their dead comrades at the last and an ordained clergyman read the burial service. An ordained minister in this the most northern frontier of a mighty empire, hundreds of miles from civilization, read the service.

"That really ends one part of the story. Deming and his party returned to Resolution. They returned through a snowstorm which afflicted Fifield for a day with snow blindness. They followed river trails which were treacherous because of the melting ice. Fifield and the Indian fell through twice. Soft snow was on the trail and they slopped through it while it froze to their snowshoes. The trip at that season was a hazardous one. It would make a story in itself; but there is another which is more interesting. Let me leave Deming now with the remark that in spite of his hunt for Fitzherbert and the dangerous and difficult condition of the trail, he made the trip to Minto and back in record time. A thousand miles in forty days.

"You want to know now of Fitzherbert. What could have happened to him to bring disaster to his party on the trail which Deming traveled so jauntily? There happened to him a combination of several little things any one of which may bring death to men in the North.



"Deming sent me a copy of Fitzherbert's diary, with his letter, and let me read between the lines, his story. 'He had planned to travel light,' explained Deming. 'He carried provisions sufficient for thirty days only. He felt that the trip should take thirty-five days and that game would provide them with enough to make up for the five extra days of travel. The usual time allowed for this trip was thirty-nine days. Fitzherbert also declined an Indian guide who knew the route thoroughly. He trusted to Cartwright who had made the trip up from Resolution but never in the opposite direction. Thus he set out from Fort Minto on December 21st for a quick journey to Resolution.'

"As I read Deming's letter, I saw dancing between the lines of his fine writing the true meaning of these words. 'He planned to travel light.' Fitzherbert, who knew the North as few men knew it, had scoffed at Deming's heavy patrols. He had set out to show how quickly it could be done by traveling light. It is possible that he might have done it, but Cartwright failed him.

"You remember the route Deming had followed—going south, of course, would be just a reversal of that route. So under Cartwright's guidance they made their way up the Pool, over the portage to the Thunder, into the Little Thunder. This river they followed for fifty-five miles at which point they should have been close to Wilderness Creek up which they must turn,



you remember, to the divide. Cartwright could not find Wilderness Creek, however. Fitzherbert sent him up to reconnoiter and he returned with the report that no creek was to be found. Fitzherbert felt that since the river was so narrow here, and obviously near its source, they must have come up too far. So he turned back.

“‘That was his fatal move,’ wrote Deming in his letter. ‘When Fitzherbert turned back he must have been but a few miles from Wilderness Creek. He turned back to his death.’

“‘Had he made directly back to Minto all would have been well. This he would probably have done had he not been so experienced a traveler and had he not been urged by duty. His orders were to proceed to Fort Resolution, you see. They said nothing of turning back. As it was he felt sure of himself. He was to prove the fact that this trail could be traveled quickly; that Deming’s preparations were unjustified.

“‘He traveled back five miles and turned up another creek, following it for four miles. Cartwright found it was not Wilderness Creek, so they returned to the river.

“‘There followed a week of futile, hopeful search. Miles were traveled in the exploration of creeks and rivers which turned out always to be false. Finally came the entry in Fitzherbert’s diary of January 17.

“‘Sent Cartwright and Sheehan off in the morning



to follow a river going south by east; they returned at 3:30 P.M. and reported that it ran right up the mountain, and Cartright said it was not the right river. I left at 8 A.M. and followed a river south but could not see any cuttings on it. Cartwright is completely lost and does not know one river from another. We have now only ten pounds of flour and eight pounds of bacon and some dried fish. My last hope is gone and the only thing I can do is to return and kill some of the dogs to feed the others and ourselves unless we can meet some Indians. We have been a week looking for a river to take us over the divide, but there are dozens of rivers and I am at a loss. I should not have taken Cartwright's word that he knew the way.'

"With that first confession of error we see Fitzherbert in a new light. He is not the self-confident, superior woodsman now. He is stripped of the conceit which made him a little less than the men he led. From this time on, his bravery and resolution stand forth unobscured by his besetting weakness. From this time on it is probable that he saw more and more vividly the terrible fate to which his vanity had brought his comrades. God knows his self-sacrifice was sufficient, and his punishment was deep, from this time on.

"The patrol was then about two hundred and sixty miles from Minto and about two hundred from Resolution. The next day they killed a dog and gave it to the other dogs for food. But the dogs would not eat



it. So they fed them the fish and ate the dog meat themselves.

"From that day the doomed men traveled two hundred and thirty miles; the trail was heavy and they were insufficiently nourished. Sheehan went through the ice one day and Fitzherbert went through, too, in an attempt to aid him. It was then that Sheehan became crippled; one foot was frozen to a degree demanding amputation; the other was badly frozen, too. There were days when Sheehan hobbled grimly on, praying for the final day, I think.

"All the men sickened, Fitzherbert said, from eating dog meat. That was all they had. Their bodies became emaciated, their faces gaunt and drawn. They pressed on frantically, but daily their journey became shorter, their steps more feeble. There were days of mist and snowstorm when they groped about the river bed, blind to each other, lashed together. Not daring to stay in camp, they tried to get on, and spent their failing strength in a blind, stumbling journey in the mist, finding themselves the following day, a pitiful distance advanced.

"Well nigh two hundred and thirty miles they traveled in this way on dog meat and in agony. Their flesh turned blackish red, their skin peeled from their faces, their feet cracked and peeled till their moccasins touched the quick. And yet no thought or word of revolt or anger at their leader was evidenced. In



fine comradeship and splendid forbearance these skeletons hobbled on till a day came when Sheehan, he of the light heart and of the soul of a child, was on all fours in the snow.

"Fitzherbert made a camp then. He left Sheehan and Cartwright with the promise to make Fort Minto in another morning and send aid to them. He left them there, and making his last entry in his diary, he left that, too, and all the food except a day's rations. No dogs now were left. 'I think we will make it all right,' he wrote in his diary.

"So with Calvert he struggled on.

"Then the food failed, then Calvert failed, and Fitzherbert crossed the man's arms on his chest and covered up his face. Then the last embers of the fire died. He lay among the ashes, seeking warmth. 'God bless all,' he wrote.

"The night fell and passed away again. Another day passed over him. And the night came once more, and he lay still."

\* \* \* \* \*

Renfrew looked across the red glow of the fire at the quiet boys.

"A terrible story," he said, as though in apology.

He arose. He stood erect above them, above the embers, and took a deep breath, looking out over the water.

"But this much you must remember always," he



said, with a great note of earnestness in his voice. "It was a splendid thing—" He paused, considering what he had said. "Not the shameful self-confidence of Fitzherbert, but the spirit with which he met his fate—the spirit which led the men who went out with him to follow him, uncomplaining, to their death.

"The world has been won for you fellows. When you run riot in the hills, when you camp at the lake-side, remember a little the men who went before. Remember a little the company among whom that lost patrol stand to-day. Where Hudson stands, and Bering; Scott, who died in the South, and Magellan and Drake. How steadfastly they clung to their dreams; how calmly they faced death; how they have made the trail safe for you the whole world over. Be worthy of them when you are in the open."

He stopped abruptly. The boys remained silent, staring at him.

"Bedtime!" he said, and turning, walked into the forest while the boys trooped into their tents. He was peculiar, in a way.



## CHAPTER X

### THE YELLOW DOG

WITH blanket rolls over their shoulders, making even wiry Dick Rose seem amazingly plump (amazing, especially if you could see the whole length of thin leg which supported the blanket-rolled torso of the lad), the Explorers climbed the mountain, seeking Surprise Lake. It was after long rambling and scrambles up precipitous rocky slopes, and trudging up uneven, earthy trails, where thick brush and the dead limbs of untrimmed trees barred the ways and fought them, that they found the lake. And they found at the same time how it came by its name.

It cannot be said that they missed the trail, they really never found it. There was no trail. The topographical map showed the lake, a round spot of blue in the mountains. It seemed on the map to be in the lap of a mountain. Neither at the top of it nor at the foot. They left the thickets and scrambled up sheer naked rock. They skirted the top of such bluffs until the brush pushed them to the edge again. Then they



turned to clamber to a still higher level and seek a passage through the trees. They fought their way gloriously through the obstacles before them, always climbing and always working around the mountain; they panted, and became vastly red and streaming with perspiration. Occasionally they threw themselves down and listened to their pulses pounding at their temples. Lay and rested till Renfrew gave the word to advance again.

They worked completely around the mountain without ever reaching the top, and it seemed to the boys that this weary attempt to break through the barrier which guarded the peak might go on forever.

Then, suddenly, at their feet, lay Surprise Lake. A round mirror of blue water, surrounded on three sides by the granite of the mountains and on another side by the green undergrowth and trees which screened it from the Explorers until the splendid moment when they burst through and found it, calm and inviting at their feet.

They rested for a while and then they bathed in it, and their voices emphasized the high solitude of the mountain lake.

It was a long, hilarious swim, and then at a fire among the rocks they ate. They ate mightily. It was epic.

Happy, and full, and lazy, the Explorers lay about their camp fire and argued one thing and another. Es-



pecially they argued a little trail which ran out of the brush onto their rocky clearing, a little, low tunnel through the brush.

"It's an animal run," said Billy Loomis. "They come to the lake for water."

But there was dissension. It was finally, in a bitter moment, referred to Renfrew.

"Perhaps it is," he said. "There must be lots of animals about here. It looks like a run. Why don't you examine it and see?"

There were groans as Alan and Dick Rose and Bub Currie rose from their couch of repletion and in their eager examination devastated the entrance to the little tunnel.

"There will be fears and hesitation and loud chatter to-night," said Renfrew, "when the beasts come out for their drink."

"Cut it out, Bub!" said Dick, shoving determinedly. "A fellow can't see anything if you bust it all up."

"It would be fun to watch here to-night," said Alan. "When the animals come out."

"The way you said the Indian boys had to watch when they were trained for the hunt," said Bub. "Let's do it to-night."

Renfrew laughed.

"You'd never keep still enough," he said. "The Indian youngsters had to sit as still as statues, for hours. They sat without twitching a muscle till the quarry



passed. It was a sort of game. If the run was fresh the animal would pass. Then the boy would hasten back to his village and tell the old man, his tutor you know, what he had seen. He was counted a dunce if he chose a false runway, or if he frightened the animal away by moving, or by a sound, or by giving the animal his scent. Animals will probably not use that runway again. You have betrayed yourselves."

"You told about a boy once," cried Dick, then. "Peter something his name was. You said you would tell us the story."

"He hunted a caribou, you said," chimed in Phil Mayo. "But he found a man."

"Tell us now," suggested Bub.

"Sure. Now is a good time for a story!"

"All about Peter something!" cried Howard Hough.

"Please!"

"His name," observed Renfrew, "was Pitah-Kin, which is Scarcee Indian language for Eagle Collar. Croyden called him Peterkin, after the boy in the poem by Southey.

"Croyden was a Corporal at Chipewyan, and he was Peterkin's best friend. When all this happened Peterkin was about eleven years old.

"When Croyden was at Bodine, which is the name of the settlement near which the reservation of Peterkin's people was, Peterkin would visit him. He would enter the cabin where Croyden stopped and, no matter



who Croyden might be talking with, or what might be the subject, he would sit silently on the floor with his back against the wall and listen. He liked to be near Croyden.

“Sometimes Croyden would be alone, and on those occasions Peterkin entered a sort of Paradise. He would sit on the table dangling his legs and Croyden would talk with the diminutive, serious, red boy, about all sorts of things for hours. Chiefly they discussed Peterkin’s progress on the trail and with his tutors, the old braves. And Croyden taught Peterkin a lot of English. They talked of the right and wrong of things, too. For the most part warlike, heroic things.

“Peterkin would turn his simple little heart inside out for Croyden in these talks. Words cannot describe the high place which Croyden held there—

“One day Peterkin sat like a copper statue clad in blue overalls, watching a run which he had tracked out with great pains and had decided was a caribou trail. He had squatted there for many minutes, perhaps three-quarters of an hour or so; squatting on his brown heels waiting for the animal to pass. Later, perhaps, it did; but before it came the man passed by. He rode on horseback, leaning down low on his horse’s neck to avoid the branches of trees which roofed this rugged, uneven trail, a caribou run, no more. The horse single-footed along the runway and passed very close to Peterkin so that, looking up, the boy could see



straight into the face of the rider as he leaned over. Alertly, and very seriously, the red boy studied the face in the brief moment which it appeared. He noticed that it bore a hard, hunted look. He noticed that the white man was scared.

"On the heels of the white man's horse, followed a pack pony. Peterkin observed closely all the details of this animal's equipment. He noticed that in a roll behind the pack it bore was a bundle of blankets. In a roll behind the saddle of the rider was a bundle of blankets as well. The horses passed with their burdens and Peterkin remained still waiting for them to get out of hearing. They had traveled several rods and he was about to move, when another traveler came down the runway. This was an animal, a shaggy, yellow, Irish terrier. It trotted silently, a little furtively down the trail, and just when it approached Peterkin's hiding place it stopped, gazing sullenly ahead. From his position further down the trail, the strange horseman had called to the dog. He called enticingly, using what pet phrases occurred to him. 'Good old fellow,' he called. 'Here, Patsy! Come on, old man!' Then an urgent, commanding tone, 'Patsy! Come here! Come, Pat!' The dog stood stock still gazing down the trail, stubbornly refusing to obey.

"Peterkin opened his brown eyes wide at this. He was accustomed to seeing dogs obey quickly at the word



## THE YELLOW DOG

---

of their master. This was a strange thing. He watched the handsome, yellow animal keenly.

“Suddenly, without changing his position, the dog began to curl his lip into a snarl. He made no sound, but his lip curled back more and more, showing his teeth viciously. Then the hair on his thick, muscular neck began to bristle, and Peterkin heard the man walking back from where he had left the horses. The dog, snarling, stood still. The man came into Peterkin’s view. He approached slowly, and somewhat warily. In his left hand he carried a rope with a running noose in it. ‘Patsy,’ he said soothingly, but in his face was black anger. He came nearer to the dog, with the noose looped in his right hand, and as he approached he kept repeating the dog’s name in soothing tones. Patsy turned a little away as the man approached, and lowered his head, glaring up at the man sideways. From deep in his throat rose an ominous rumble. Still repeating his terms of endearment, the man stooped over, extending his right hand as though to pat the dog’s head. There was a flash of tawny yellow as the dog struck home and leaped away; and a volley of curses as the man jumped back, his right hand slashed well nigh to the bone. Patsy, the deed done, darted further back the trail and turned again to watch the man. His victim flung down the rope, and picking up chunks of wood, or stones, hurled them at the animal wildly, and cursed as he did so. The dog neatly dodged



what missiles came his way, and waited further events.

Tiring in a moment of his futile attack, the man turned and walked back in the direction of his horses. Soon Peterkin heard him returning, and as he came the dog warily turned tail and disappeared up the runway, and Peterkin, without having moved a muscle as he watched all this round-eyed, waited patiently for developments. Soon he heard the report of the revolver. Three shots, fired at uneven intervals. Then the man came back with the revolver butt protruding from his trouser pocket, nursing his wounded hand with a look of furious determination on his face. He passed Peterkin's place, and continued to the horses, which Peterkin soon heard trotting off down the trail. Still Peterkin waited. The hoofbeats of the horses died away in the distance; the utter silence of the forest reigned. Peterkin never moved a muscle. The drama might not be over yet, you see, and Peterkin was an Indian. He would be sure of the very end before he moved.

"The end came, of one act at least, soon after the hoofbeats died. Suddenly, on the runway, appeared the yellow dog. With his nose to the ground, he was obviously following the trail of the white horseman. He came to the point opposite Peterkin's hiding place, and stopped, scenting the boy. Then, with a terrier's curiosity, he trotted through the brush straight up to the little red watchman. Peterkin looked into the terrier's eyes without moving, and in a perfectly natural



## THE YELLOW DOG

---

manner spoke with him. The dog nosed the boy all over, licking his face, and talking to him in shrill, eager barks. Then Peterkin rose, stretched mightily his stiff young body, and with a hand on the dog's head, he walked out onto the trail. Here Patsy suddenly put his muzzle to the ground, and as if remembering an important engagement, he left Peterkin's side and trotted off down the trail, his nose on the scent, following the strange rider.

"Peterkin watched him until he disappeared, and then he, too, struck to the trail, which led to the river. And along the river he made his way, running, walking, skipping; investigating every sign and incident of the riverside until he came to the village of his people.

"Here he made for the lodge of the old man, his tutor, and him he told of the strange happenings he had seen upon the caribou run. He told his story with a wealth of detail, which I doubt that any white man, even a trained detective, could have achieved without the aid of a notebook. The old Indian listened to him until he had finished, then he asked him to repeat some of the incidents and a description of the white man's horse and pack pony. Then he gave his verdict. 'Go to Bodine, Pitah-kin,' he said. 'Tell this tale to the red-coat, Croyden, for this is a matter which the redcoats should know. When the white man with the yellow dog passed through here some time ago his right hand was very sick. He may go to Bodine so that the white



medicine man may mend it for him. Get to Bodine, Pitah-kin, before the white man departs."

"So Peterkin ran, and walked, and skipped on his way to Bodine.

"He came to Bodine. He came down the green wagon track which wound through the evergreens. But for these evergreens which always seem to me inhospitable and hard shelter at best, and the scant green grass which edged the wagon track, Bodine has very little natural beauty to commend it. There is much dust of brown earth in its streets, when the snow does not fill them; and its gray log cabins are scattered in a disorderly array. On three sides of the settlement are the gaunt hills clad with scattered thickets of evergreen trees, on the other side was the clear blue lake, with its yellow shores, and the surrounding brush. Bodine was notable chiefly for its fine isolation, and the consequent clear stillness of its environs; it was a notable place for Peterkin, because Croyden had his cabin there. Of course, later Croyden went on his way, and Peterkin was left then without him; and without any one in the world who could ever take his place. In those later years Croyden often thought of the little savage; it was in a moment of such reflection, at the King's Hotel at Regina, that he told me this story. He was fond of Peterkin, and remembered him. Peterkin's love for Croyden was of a more splendid sort. Peterkin loved the man so well, that after he was gone the man Peter-



kin loved stayed in his heart, and made him brave, and good, and merciful, and fair in all the things he did—always.

“As I have said, Croyden told me of this in a comfortable hour after dinner, at the hotel in Regina. It seems the white man rode into Bodine early in the afternoon. He, Croyden, had been at work on a bit of land which he cultivated, and was not in uniform. He believed, he said, that had Klien, which was the name of the strange rider, known that there was a policeman at Bodine, he would never have come into the town, even though the wound in his hand was badly poisoned. But as it was he rode in with his pack animal, and sought the doctor. Doctor Dufoyle was at that moment sitting before Croyden’s fireplace puffing a pipe after having lunched heartily with the policeman. Klien rode up to the porch and dismounting, entered the cabin. Croyden welcomed him in, for which he was rewarded by a slight grin showing under the stranger’s black beard. The man’s face seemed drawn out of all proportion with the hurt of his right hand. This hurt he showed to the doctor, who further made use of Croyden’s hospitality by treating it in his kitchen. He lanced the hand, cleaned out the wound, and bandaged it.

“It thereupon developed that Klien had not yet lunched, so Croyden placed food and milk upon his table, and with the doctor he sat beside the fire while



the man ate. They questioned him tactfully, and while they spoke, Peterkin came in. As usual when he found Croyden engaged he sat like a mouse on the floor against the wall, and he sat so quietly that he might have been a stuffed Indian boy as the moose head above him was stuffed, or the great eagle which spread its wings over the fireplace. He sat there listening to all that Klien had to say.

"The man seemed eager to tell about himself. It was a dog which had wounded his hand; some Indian hound which he had tried to pet. He would never make that mistake again. He had been prospecting on the Black Snake river, but had found very little except for an occasional nugget, and a handful or so of dust. He had camped some five days' journey up the river. Now he was on his way down the Athabasca. He had procured his horses and kit at Edmonton.

"Croyden remarked upon his daring in taking such a trip alone. The dangers must have been great, he said, for a lone prospector. Was he accustomed to this country? Yes, replied Klien, he was accustomed to the country pretty well.

"The doctor thought it was a pretty reckless adventure. Supposing this matter of blood poisoning had come about while he was up the Black Snake, reasoned the doctor, his chances would have been very small. Klien was inclined to scoff at that, and he set out to make it very clear to them that he had, indeed, been



alone. He emphasized it, and became quite excited about it. 'All alone,' he cried. 'I tell you there was no one with me! Why should I have any one with me? I know this country like a book! No one was necessary, was there? I wanted no one else. I am not a man who cares for much company. I preferred to go alone. There's nothing in that, is there?'

"Croyden and the doctor hastened to reassure him, wondering at his excitement.

"'No,' said Peterkin abruptly, rising to his feet. 'He was not. No, he was not. There is one dog. He is a yellow dog.' And that was all the little fellow could find English words to say.

"The effect of this shrill voice, coming so unexpectedly from the stuffed Indian boy, was amazing. Klien turned very white, and his voice became abruptly feeble, and faltering. He looked at the boy, and said, 'What is all this?'

"The boy spoke rapidly to Croyden in the language of his tribe. 'The dog who bit this white man is a good dog. The man shot at him, but he could not kill him. The dog is the dog of another man. This man carries two blanket rolls. He was not alone!' With a bellow of rage Klien turned on the boy, and made as if to strike him. 'You lie!' he cried.

"Croyden leaped to the man's side, seizing his arm. 'Sit down!' he ordered curtly. The man returned to



his seat, and as he did so Croyden stood between him and the door.

“‘I think you should know, Mr. Klien,’ he said, ‘that I am of the Mounted Police. Under the circumstances you will understand the necessity which confronts me of detaining you. You will consider yourself my guest until this matter is investigated. Of course you will be only too glad of the opportunity to prove that what the boy has said is not true, or if it should be true, that it means nothing which is irregular. I warn you that anything you may say now may be used to your disadvantage.’

“Klien took it very coolly. ‘Of course,’ he said, ‘the matter must be cleared up. I’m sorry I got so mad. It looks bad. The kid made me mad.’

“So Croyden and the doctor questioned him. At first he stuck to his story that he made the trip alone; but they went outside and examined the packs which he carried. They found the two blanket rolls, made up separately, and found also some clothes with the initials B. D. H. marked upon them. B. D. H., of course, could mean any name, but certainly not that of Klien. Then Klien admitted that there had been another man. A man whose name he did not know had joined him for a day or two, and had then gone off to Mallard Lake. He had left these things behind. He carried a sleeping bag and forgot the blanket roll; he had also left the clothes. He had taken some of Klien’s clothes,



he supposed by mistake. He had not mentioned this man because he had been only a casual campmate. When questioned about the dog, Klien replied that this had been an Indian cur which he had fed, and which had followed him. When he endeavored to pet it the dog had bitten him. The boy either lied or was mistaken about hearing the dog called Patsy. He had never called the dog by any name.

"It was a likely story, but Croyden knew either Peterkin or Klien was lying, and he believed that it was not Peterkin.

"Peterkin, meanwhile, had found a treasure. He found it on the ground where the man had opened the packs. It was a broken brass tie pin with a bright onyx stone. This pin Peterkin put in the pocket of his overalls where he already kept two bright pebbles, a pocket knife which could not be opened for the rust on it, and a single worn penny piece.

"The men turned to the house again; and on the porch stood, backing away from their approach, the yellow dog. Klien cursed and dashed forward. The dog leaped from under the sweep of his arm, and bounded away to a safe distance. Croyden and the doctor exchanged glances as they followed Klien up the porch steps, and Peterkin, huddling closely up to Croyden's side, called suddenly, 'Patsy.' The dog lifted his head and took a pace or two toward them.



Klien glared at the boy with desperate fury, and Croyden smiled, understanding the whole little play.

"The following morning, Croyden and Klien made their way to the reservation, and were accompanied by the boy, Peterkin, and Firth, the Hudson Bay Company's factor who was to be Croyden's assistant in this business.

"At the reservation they took into council the old man, Peterkin's tutor, to whom the boy had first told the story. Ki-chi-pwit was a very wise old Indian, and he told the white men Peterkin's story over again and added to it many wise observations. Thus he pointed out that if Klien really obtained his horses and kit at Edmonton he could not be an experienced trail rider—not experienced enough to make the trip alone. For the spoor of the pack horse showed that it had not been shod for many moons. An experienced trekker would never have left Edmonton without having that pack horse shod. Also, if the white man had nothing to conceal, why had he followed the caribou runways instead of the open trail? It was a bad thing.

"Ki-chi-pwit would go with his brother, the redcoat, and they would follow Klien's back trail to the point where the other man—the unknown man—had been left behind.

"So he did, and two other Indians went with him. These were Etah, and John, young men of the tribe."



## CHAPTER XI

### THE MAN IN THE SWAMP

"KLIEN made a graceless and sulky guide," Renfrew continued. "And he was reluctant, too. But Etah kept at his bridle rein, and twice had to remind the man that the direction he proposed to follow was wrong; that his trail plainly showed that he had come another way. The ill-shod horse was a great assistance to the Indian trackers, for its track stood out to their forest-trained sight as a track different from any other in the wilderness. And of such remarkable skill were these children of nature that they followed at a swift walk, a trail which was blank to a white man.

"After what should have been three days' journey up the Black Snake, but a journey which had used five of their days because of the circuitous and secret route Klien had favored in the footpaths and game runs, they came to Stony Creek.

" 'Now this is the trail to Mallard Lake,' said Croyden. He turned to Klien. 'If your companion went to Mallard Lake I presume he left you at this point?'



"Klien looked quickly from one to another of the party.

" 'Yes,' he said. 'He went up here.'

" 'He rode with you for how long? One—two days—before he reached this point?' asked Croyden.

" 'Almost two days,' said Klien. 'I overtook him at camp a day and a half up the river.'

" 'Etah and John,' said Croyden. 'Follow the trail of this other man to Mallard Lake.'

"Immediately Etah and John started seeking a track. They ran up and down the bank of the Stony Creek, which was wide and shallow. They stooped close to the earth. They examined rocks and trees.

"Klien watched them with a smile. Then he laughed. 'Fools,' he cried. 'You will never find his trail in the rocks. He rode up the stream on the sandy bottom. The banks were too rocky.'

" 'Follow it up,' said Croyden quietly.

"And the two Indians, knee-deep in the shallow water, made their way up the creek leading their ponies by their halters. The rest of the party rode on. Ki-chi-pwit was now at Klien's bridle, but he had little time to discuss the trail. Klien pushed on rapidly now; he explained that from here he had followed the open river trail keeping to the banks or riding in the streams. Chiefly it seemed he rode in the streams. But when he led the party into shallow water, Ki-chi-pwit kept to the shore, following a well-defined trail.



## THE MAN IN THE SWAMP

---

This irritated Klien noticeably. At the night camps Ki-chi-pwit sat beside Croyden and they spoke together softly in the Indian language. Klien blinked across the blaze at them, puffing his pipe, his black beard making his face impassive. None could tell what was in his thoughts.

“So they came one day to the site of a camp which, it was apparent, had been used for many days. It lay on a high bank of the river, at a point where the Black Snake had widened to a placid pool. Directly below the bank lay a mess of swampy water thick with rushes and the green slime on it.

“‘Is this one of your camps?’ Croyden asked.

“Again the man looked from face to face like a baited bear, seeking some loophole. Then, ‘We stayed here a night,’ he said. ‘It was not a full day’s journey, but we found the camp made ready to live in, as you see it. So we spent the night here.’

“‘We’ll do the same,’ said Croyden dryly.

“In the morning Klien began his preparations for the day’s journey; but Croyden interrupted him. It was after breakfast. Peterkin played kitchen maid at the water’s edge, and Klien was bending over his blanket roll making it secure. Croyden approached and stood over him.

“‘No, not to-day,’ he said quietly.

“Klien dropped his pack and stood erect. ‘We will



not travel to-day,' Croyden said. 'I think we will stay here and look about us.'

" 'But you are making a mistake,' cried Klien. 'We camped here only for the night. My permanent camp was further up. If you are suspicious there is the place to look.' Then he approached a step nearer, and menaced Croyden with narrowed lids. 'If you find nothing, Mr. Corporal, you will leave the Force. This is a serious thing, holding me like this, forcing me to travel like this.'

"Croyden was not abashed.

" 'I think you should know something of our evidence, Mr. Klien,' he said. 'From the beginning of our journey you have persistently tried to take us off your trail. From this point to Stony Creek, according to your story, you had a man riding with you. Following your trail from Stony Creek, we find only the track of one man leading a badly shod pack pony. Your own track. And we have found that track along the shore in many places, where you have led us through the stream. Under these circumstances surely you will want us to make every effort to prove your story true.'

"Klien's face darkened. 'I've only got this to say. If you don't prove your suspicions, Croyden, I'll break you. I'll run you from the Force and make you a laughing stock between here and the border. You have



nothing against me, but children's tales and Indian grudges. Prove it. You can't.'

" 'Very well,' said Croyden. 'Unroll your blankets, Klien, and watch me prove it. I've a shrewd suspicion that we'll do it here at this very camp.'

"Then came Peterkin to Croyden with a confession to make, and with the broken onyx pin. This pin and the manner in which he had acquired it, worried Peterkin. He knew it had fallen from the blanket roll, and that he had done wrong to pocket it. He would have given it up sooner only that such acts as this he knew were 'wrong and unworthy' in Croyden's code for Indian boys. Peterkin did not wish to appear before Croyden as wrong and unworthy. So he thought about it for six days, and decided that it was equally undesirable to appear wrong and unworthy before himself; so he came to Croyden with the pin and with the confession. Croyden accepted both very gravely, and told Peterkin that this confession was an act worthy of a chieftain and a brave. 'You say it came from the blanket roll?' he asked the boy, and Peterkin nodded eagerly and happily. He wished he had taken a lot of things so that he could confess some more. 'Then it may have belonged to B. D. H.,' said Croyden.

"The camp had consisted of two rough shelters of a style used often by woodsmen and known as lean-tos. They were built of hewn timbers, and one about six feet high at its tallest point, had obviously been the



abode of two men. In it were the remains of two beds, made of cut branches deftly bedded down. The other, made higher and more commodious had stabled three horses.

"The fireplace had been built in a pit scooped out in the sandy soil. It had an embankment around it made sturdy with heavy green logs. The ashes and charcoal were deep in the pit and mixed with sand which had put out many fires. Evidently the campers had built tremendous roaring fires, an unusual thing for experienced woodsmen to do. The great ashheap rose almost level with the embankment surrounding it.

"Croyden and Firth moved about the encampment all morning, examining the lean-tos, the ground about, the trees and cuttings. They took many notes. Kichi-pwit went farther afield. He kept his nose close to the ground. He followed invisible tracks; examined grasses and patches of brush with the interest of a naturalist poring over a new specimen. All the scraps and litter of the old camp were examined by the three men as they were found, and Klien sat now here, now there, and watched silently.

"At about noon Etah and John came in. They bore little evidence of having traveled day and night, though their ponies were very tired. They came in and told Croyden their story as Firth listened, too, and the others prepared lunch.

"The story the Indian trackers told was a simple



## THE MAN IN THE SWAMP

---

one. They had followed Stony Creek for two days, traveling swiftly so that they covered the distance a white man would have covered in three days. If any other man had followed the creek within the last two months he must have kept in the stream all the way; day and night, in depth and shallow, rapid and still water; for there was no sign of a traveler on the banks. That was their story.

"It was a silent meal. Only once Klien spoke: 'What luck?' he asked mockingly. 'Your friend left his hatchet behind,' said Croyden, and he handed Klien a little, battered hatchet. In the wooden handle was carved the initials B. D. H.

"Klien looked at the implement. 'He will miss that,' he said.

"Croyden gazed significantly at the rusty steel. 'He left it about two months ago, I should say,' he said quietly.

"Klien stared at him a moment, and then dropped his gaze to the ground, plucking at his beard. Then: 'It was always like this—rusty,' he said. For the rest of the meal they were silent.

"Afterward the search began again. With Etah and John to help it became very thorough. Etah went further up the trail to find out what he could of how the campers first arrived at this spot. John disappeared into the brush, Ki-chi-pwit combed the river edge. Firth attended to the lean-tos which, with Peter-



kin's aid he cleaned out, examining the refuse carefully. Croyden delved in the great ashheap of the old fireplace.

"Suddenly Croyden called to Firth and spoke with him quietly. Firth left him and coming over to where Klien sat watching, he took his place before him, a silent guard. Then Croyden drew from the ashes the charred remnant of a leather boot. Following this there came a bit of a flannel shirt, the thick part where the collar is; then a piece of belt, a pocketknife, and another piece of boot leather. All these Croyden placed in a row before him, and began gravely to examine them. Klien watched him, impassive.

"Ki-chi-pwit came to the top of the bank, and Klien rose to his feet. The old Indian approached Croyden and handed him a broken brass pin. Croyden took the onyx bauble from his pocket and matched it to the piece the Indian gave him. The broken pieces fitted perfectly. 'Keep an eye on our friend, Firth,' he said. 'I think our trail leads to the river.' And he followed the Indian down the bank. Klien walked restlessly up and down, Firth watching him.

"Soon came Croyden bounding up the bank again, and he whistled for the other Indians who came in quickly at his call, and at a word from him, followed down to the water's edge.

"Ki-chi-pwit had been examining the bank occasionally with microscopical exactitude all day and had



## THE MAN IN THE SWAMP

---

told no one of his observations there until he had linked them all together. Here were the heelprints of one who had gone down the steep slope with a heavy burden, digging in his heels to keep his footing. Here were threads of dark worsted and of yellow cotton caught upon the weeds and thorny bushes; eight such threads. At some time a heavy burden had been rolled or dragged down the slope which was covered with worsted and cotton material; such as woolen trousers and yellow cotton shirt. Perhaps the man who had made the heel marks had carried or dragged the burden. Since this broken brass pin lay on the bank and the head of it had been found with Klien, perhaps it was Klien who had made the heel marks.

“‘The body lies in the swamp,’ said Ki-chi-pwit, simply. This was the first word said among them which spoke of murder.

“Croyden made no remark upon it, but with the three Indians he started to search the shore. Of this a narrow shelf ran along beneath the bank. It was wet, spongy soil, slippery with wet mosses, and the thick brush upon the bank overhung it, pushing the searchers toward the swamp so that they were often in the mucky water above their ankles. Diligently the Indians searched, but only found an occasional footprint in the mud, and here and there upon the twigs and branches of the underbrush, a tell-tale thread or so. While they were searching a rude interruption oc-



curred. There came a volley of oaths from above where Klien and Firth were, and a stone came hurtling down the embankment; with it came a sinuous, tawny body, and the yellow dog was running up and down the narrow path about their feet.

"In a way this ended their search, for the dog, looking always into the swamp, ran up and down the trail barking sharply, as a wolf runs in a cage; he restricted his running within a short space. Thereupon Croyden judged that this space probably marked the point where the burden had been carried into the bog.

"The Indians removed their clothes now, and wading into the swamp started treading about in the deep muck, feeling for the hidden thing; and it was late afternoon when they found it. The body of a man.

"They carried the grewsome object ashore, and up the bank. Then they coolly donned their clothes as if the thing they had found had been a log. Croyden examined it; and Klien, after one furtive look, sat on a stone and buried his face in his hands.

"Croyden found that the dead man had suffered a violent blow which had crushed the base of his skull. This undoubtedly had killed him. Then Croyden left the body and stood over Klien.

"'Who is this man?' he asked, and in his voice was the accusation of murder.

"Klien raised his head, staring at Croyden a little wildly. 'I have never seen him!' he cried.



"Croyden pointed to where the dog pitifully, frantically nuzzled at his master's body. 'Yet you knew his dog,' he said in the same uncompromising tone. 'You knew his dog, and listen! the man's shirt is marked with the same initials his blankets bore. That trick of marking his clothes was your undoing, Klien. Why did you kill him?'

"Klien rose to his feet. 'It is not so bad!' he cried passionately. 'It was an accident. This is how it was. My horse fell ill, and we shot him. He lies back there in the brush. We quarreled about who should ride the other. He didn't trust me, he thought if I rode the horse I might desert him. We had barely food enough for two on the journey down. We quarreled for days about that miserable horse. Then one day we fought with our fists and then we closed in. I threw him and his head struck a stone. There! That stone there!' he pointed to a rock partly imbedded in the earth. 'That was an accident, wasn't it? I couldn't help it, could I? I had to defend myself. But it killed him. I was scared. You fellows find out so much. I sunk the body in the swamp.'

"Croyden looked at the man searchingly. There was a strange imperturbability about his bearded face, his eyes challenged the Policeman.

"'I see,' said Croyden. 'His head struck a rock.'

"Then suddenly Klien pushed him aside and would have leaped forward had not Firth seized him. 'Ah,



stop him!" cried Klien wildly. "Stop him! Not that! Ah, God, not that!" He raved, shrieking, so that his voice was cracked and hoarse.

"The men looked in the direction he gazed, as one demented gazes at imaginary tormenters, and there was the yellow dog digging vigorously into the earth, nuzzling and coughing at the hole he made.

"'Hold him,' cried Croyden to Firth, and leaping forward he took up the dog's task while the animal whined at his elbow. He dug with his bare fingers, heedless of the cuts and hurts it inflicted; and barely a foot down he found the head of a hatchet with a stain upon the blunt end which was blood.

"Holding it in his hand he advanced upon Klien. 'So he struck his head upon a stone,' he said, and held the metal out.

"Klien raised his arms, bent at the elbow, and looked wildly up into the sky. 'Oh, God!' he cried. 'Oh—' and he buried his face in the crook of his arm while the yellow dog whined at his master's body."



## CHAPTER XII

### THE LAST LAUGH

IT was on the down trip. A few more days would bring the Explorers home again. Conversation at the fireside had turned back to the man who had chased a ghost.

"He was a very peculiar man," said Renfrew. "But a gentleman. Woodcott was undoubtedly an unusually fine gentleman."

"You mean he was polite?" piped Phil Mayo.

"Yes. And honorable and brave."

"Is that what made the Indians like him so well?"

"Yes; and he was imperturbable. He gave no more evidence of what was going on in his mind than a totem pole would—if it had a mind. That was the quality, however, which made him impossible among white men. They mistook his unyielding calm for contempt. He had a cool stare which irritated men, as it irritated me when I first met him. That was on the Fort Walsh road; I told you about it. He faced danger, too, with the same coolness, and the In-



dians admire that sort of thing very deeply."

"Tell us a story about Woodcott." Alan came up from the canoes where he had been at work with two of the smaller fry, and threw himself down beside the fire.

"Did you stop old Silver Side's leak?" asked Renfrew.

"Tight as a barrel!" Alan declared.

Renfrew arose and examined Alan's handiwork. "A good job," he said.

"And now may we have a story, please?" And as though in response to a ritual, the boys followed Alan with a babble of pleading.

"About Woodcott!" they begged.

As his custom was, Renfrew seemed to search in the flames.

"Woodcott enlisted with the Mounted Police because his hog ranch at Battleford was a failure," he explained. "He was a gentleman of delicacy and refinement who was not blessed with a sense of humor, and it was unfortunate that he was sent to Pipe Lake. Pipe Lake is just over the Montana border in the McLeod District, and it is the refuge of the offscouring of the American frontier.

"It is one of the glories of the British that wherever they make their way, they take their particular brand and hallmark of civilization and plant it with their roof-tree. Woodcott was unfortunate because civili-



zation to him meant chiefly the game of tennis. He was a tennis fiend. His hog ranch had failed because he had put in such an abundance of time grading a tennis court, and teaching his French-Canadian ranch hands how to play the game with him, that the hogs—tender animals—had died. The Metis had picked up the idea of the game very quickly, but had never learned to respect the boundaries of a court. Also they had decided that Woodcott was a little mad, and their attitude had interfered with his service.

“When he arrived at Pipe Lake, he first investigated the nature of his duties, carefully covered his patrol, and then set to work grading a tennis court. When Pipe Lake observed this, all the case-hardened ruffians who happened to be loafing there at the time laughed uproariously; and in this they were shrewdly encouraged by Cacelotte. But the uproar was carefully enclosed within locked doors, for no one in the town yet knew what manner of man Woodcott really was, and no one wanted to be the first to find it out.

“Cacelotte was not a French Canadian, but some sort of mixed breed Irishman. He hailed from Helena, Montana, and had come to Canada because of a disagreement with a sheriff. The charge had not pursued him, and he had settled in Pipe Lake to live comfortably from the forbidden sale of imitation whiskey to cowpunchers and Indians who were not supposed to drink it. This dishonorable occupation he had plied



so wisely that he had outlived many a more reckless competitor, and had become an evil power in the community. It was his business to promote the ridicule which followed Woodcott's work upon the tennis court, and he was alert for every opportunity to do so. To the initiated, those who had lived for long upon the frontier and had seen many redcoats come and go, it developed into a sort of game between Woodcott and 'Cacelotte's crowd.'

"Cacelotte strolled out to the Police post, just beyond the town and watched the Constable at work on the grading; and without any apparent reason several of his cronies followed him, so that they came and draped themselves over Woodcott's fence while Cacelotte spoke with him.

" 'Layin' out some truck?' questioned the Irishman.

"Woodcott looked up, but he seemed to gaze through Cacelotte rather than at him.

" 'Hello, Cacelotte,' he murmured politely; and there was nothing for Cacelotte to do but ask his question over again. Woodcott gazed at him with aloof courtesy as he did so, and Cacelotte felt that he would have liked to wring the redcoat's neck. But you can bet Woodcott never betrayed the fact that he suspected it.

" 'It's a tennis court,' he explained patiently, as though Cacelotte was exceedingly young, and could not be expected to understand. You know how mad that



sort of attitude makes you—it made Cachelotte feel just like that.

“ ‘Huh!’ he scoffed. ‘A tennis court! It’s a tennis court, boys.’

“But to the amazement of those who had come to scoff, Woodcott quietly but positively turned his back upon them and serenely went on with his work as though they were not on earth. It was very disconcerting, and as a matter of fact a decided point in Woodcott’s favor, because, taken thus unexpectedly, Cachelotte’s expedition was a dismal failure. They had come to irritate the redcoat, instead they left with a decided sense of irritation themselves.

“After that Pipe Lake watched more alertly than ever the development of the game, and Cachelotte’s freedom was understood to be the stake. The whole town, knowing well enough what Cachelotte’s business was, knew, too, that Woodcott would spare no effort to gather the evidence which would send him to jail. But Cachelotte had carried on his wholesale liquor traffic under the eyes of several redcoats before Woodcott, and it remained to be seen whether the Constable was clever enough to succeed. Pipe Lake was especially interested because it appeared that Cachelotte was ‘mad,’ and it was conceivable that there might develop a physical encounter between the two men. A fight in which Woodcott and the whiskey runner would meet face to face. Cachelotte boasted of being a bad man, but he



owed the continued success of his business to his wisdom in never having put this to the proof; for there is an adage in the Canadian Northwest which is a very wise one: 'You can't fight the Mounted Police and get away with it.'

"A number of Cachelotte's competitors had been bad men, too, but having tried to prove it to inquisitive red-coats, their trade had been uncovered, and they without exception had been sent to jail. Still, Cachelotte had a great contempt for Woodcott's ways, and his tennis, in addition to which he was irritated; so Pipe Lake hoped for the best.

"Meanwhile Woodcott walked the streets, and made his patrols without ever being put to the test. He was always imperturbable, always coolly courteous. He heartily annoyed every man with whom he came in contact by his cold reserve, made no friends and a great many enemies; and even they who were inclined most leniently toward him, felt a mild curiosity to 'see him taken down a peg.' His chief worry, which he concealed behind an impassive brow, was that he could find no partner for his tennis. The youthful manager of the Bank of Montreal played a poor hand occasionally, but for the most part Woodcott had to be content with marking the wall of the Police barn in two-foot squares and keeping his hand in by bouncing the ball against it.

"Then Charlie Yung fell from grace. Charlie, who



was a middle-aged Chinaman, kept the Palace Café at the edge of the town, and his place was a great resort for 'Cacelotte's crowd.' Having a disagreement with one of these in the small hours of a certain summer's morning, Charlie stuck his knife into the man, and at once fell from grace. 'Cacelotte's crowd' did its best to keep the matter dark, but they made the initial mistake of accepting a ride for the wounded man in the buckboard of Kingsley, the bank manager, and the matter reached the ears of Woodcott.

"Woodcott was entertaining that night. Constable Cunliffe, from Big Bend had been brought by the gentle hand of duty into the neighborhood of Pipe Lake, and he had dropped in to spend a day and wait for his mail. Woodcott early discovered that Cunliffe had played tennis for the varsity at McGill, and he had warmed toward him; they had sat up all the night exchanging the stories of their lives. So when Kingsley strolled out in the morning with his story of the brawl at Charlie Yung's, he found the two redcoats going at their game hammer and tongs. They were completely happy, and the news which the bank manager brought obviously bored Woodcott extremely.

"'Is the Chinaman still there?' he drawled, mildly looking through Kingsley's third waistcoat button. Kingsley said he thought so, and Woodcott turned from his game with elevated brows.

"'Two all, and fifteen love,' he said to the astonished



Cunliffe. 'Remember the score, will you? I have to go and arrest a Chinaman.' And he strolled off to change his clothes.

"'Queer specimen,' said Cunliffe, looking after him. 'Think I'll get into harness, too. You never know.' And with an apology to the bank manager he was off.

"Now Cunliffe knew his job pretty well, and that included a knowledge of Chinamen. He knew that according to the ways of his people, Charlie Yung should now have been shaking the dust of Pipe Lake from his heels with all the speed at his command. Cunliffe, who had heard some rumor of Woodcott's lack of popularity at Pipe Lake, sensed contempt for the Force and possible resistance in Charlie's staying. He hurried into his uniform, but in spite of his haste was amazed to see, while he still struggled with his boots, Woodcott immaculately uniformed mounted upon a charger, immaculately groomed and saddled, riding out of the gate for all the world as though he was off for a canter in Hyde Park. As soon as he passed through the gate, however, Woodcott drew up his curb, and made toward the town at a fine business-like gallop. Cunliffe left the window, and struggled with his clothes in bungling haste, while he pondered the strange behavior of the Chinaman.

"The explanation was a simple one.

"Cacelotte had hurried to Charlie Yung as soon as he had heard of the brawl; and that was very soon. I



can't tell you all that passed between them, but it afterward developed that Charlie was not in a position to refuse the Irishman's orders or desires; also, I suppose the whiskey runner assured him of his protection and support. Anyway, Cachelotte prevailed upon Yung to overcome his craven impulse to run away, and stay to resist the redcoat. So in that much Cunliffe was right. The plan was to offer resistance to the Force, and that is little short of revolution in the Northwest. Of course neither Cachelotte nor Yung knew of Cunliffe's arrival the night before. Cachelotte was convinced that the supercilious courtesy of the Constable was a cloak for yellow fear, and in this way he planned to prove it before all Pipe Lake. He spread the news about the town.

"'He'll think Charlie won't show fight!' he gloated before his comrades. 'He'll ride in expectin' a scairt Chink, and find a rip snorter! Have yer ever seen a Chink when he's excited?'—And he launched into a sea of profane reminiscences.

"So when Woodcott rode into Pipe Lake that morning, he found a fair-sized crowd gathered about the Palace Café waiting to see him make the arrest.

"Woodcott drew up significantly enough outside the office of McKellar, the magistrate, and dismounting, bounded upstairs for his warrant. The expectant crowd saw him emerge from the office of the magistrate and stride serenely down the street toward the



Palace Café. He faced them for a moment as he approached the door; but it must have been only for a moment, for he never halted in his stride.

"He must have appeared very trim, handsome, and youthful. He was well built in a more delicate, well-proportioned manner than the men of the North and his uniform fitted him with glovelike fidelity. He wore it like an actor or a prince, and he leaped the three steps to the café door with the grace of an athlete. Yet the faces of the crowd bore mingled anger, contempt, and dislike. Spectators, too, who might have been disposed to sympathize with him, were irritated by the glance with which he regarded them. It was the glance of the prince for the pauper.

"Woodcott was a ruined gentleman who could not face his situation.

"In the refined and gentle home in which he had been reared he had learned to judge a man by the courtesy of his bearing; by his consideration for the happiness of others; by his education and accomplishments, and by the good taste with which he applied these gifts. A fine standard, but very easy to apply. Thrown among the rough men of the Northwest, Woodcott was too indolent, or perhaps too proud of his own standards to chip through the granite exterior of the men about him and find the virtues and the finer feelings hidden there. So he gazed on the crowd of them with his serene, self-confident stare and en-



tered Charlie's café without betraying a doubt of his success.

"There were one or two men in the restaurant when he entered, and Charlie was in the kitchen preparing food for them. Woodcott walked briskly down the double line of shabby tables and through the door into the kitchen. Charlie was flapping a flapjack as the redcoat entered and he swung into action immediately. With a shrill scream he flapped the pancake he was turning full into Woodcott's face where, being only half-cooked, it clung uncomfortably. The Chinaman then seized a carving knife and leaped forward, squealing. Woodcott, clutching at the pancake, dodged, drew his pistol and fired at the hand which held the knife. He missed the hand, but hit the knife blade, breaking it off short near the handle. Charlie slashed forward with what of his weapon was left and ripped the scarlet tunic from throat to belt; then without pause, he seized the hand with which Woodcott held his gun and buried his teeth in the wrist. The gun rattled to the floor and Woodcott clutched at the yellow throat with his left hand.

"The sound of the shot brought Cacerlotte's crowd to the door of the kitchen, and the windows were obscured by the faces which pressed against them. For the most part, the spectators arrived in time to see the Chinaman suddenly release the redcoat's wrist, and, darting to the stove, seize the basin of creamy flapjack



dough. Woodcott whisked up his gun from the floor and fired; but as he did so, basin and dough were inverted on his head, and the bullet pierced the coffee urn. The hot liquid spurted forth, striking the Chinaman's chest. He squealed and screamed while Woodcott strove to wipe the thick and sticky mixture from his eyes. Then Charlie was upon him again; this time with a dishrag. It was a slimy, sloppy dishrag, and slinging it about with an insane chattering, Charlie swiped it back and forth across the redcoat's face. Then it caught the pistol, and gun and dishrag went hurtling across the room to plop into the boiling soup kettle. This gave Charlie a new idea. He laid violent hands on the soup kettle, but Woodcott seized his arms behind. The Chinaman would not let go, however, and they wrestled about absurdly, Charlie holding the kettle of soup before him and Woodcott pinioning his arms from behind. The soup spilled over, mixing with the pancake dough on the floor. They slid and slopped about in it until their absurd appearance was emphasized by dish towels which draped over their heads and faces when they passed beneath the towel racks on the wall. Then Woodcott stepped upon a boiled onion, and abruptly sat down. Charlie came down with him, and the hot soup going high into the air descended upon them like a thick and highly flavored waterfall. With his tunic ripped, and his head smeared with a slimy mixture, Woodcott was now covered with



hot soup and had soft meat and vegetables in his hair. If he had time to think as he sat on the kitchen floor, it must have occurred to him that this was undignified. But he had little time; the action was very swift.

“He sought to hold Charlie in his grasp, but the soup was slippery and it had rained on the just and unjust alike. So Charlie, after a few ineffectual claws at Woodcott’s face, was up and tearing about his kitchen again, hurling everything which came to his hands at the redcoat. He missed his shot with a cleaver, but was more successful with a tin of mustard which hit Woodcott on one ear and sprinkled him with yellow powder. The bombardment with apples was quite successful, but two could play at that game, and Woodcott was a straighter and more powerful shot. He placed one with great force in Charlie’s right eye, and shrieking with rage the Chinaman came back with a T-bone steak which slapped Woodcott across the face. Beside the steak was a long, sharp knife, and having let the steak go, Charlie seized the knife. Woodcott closed in upon him and they struggled for possession of it. Woodcott turned Charlie’s arm behind him and started to twist while Charlie, in agony, clawed and beat him with his free hand. Above them as they struggled, was shelf upon shelf of catsup bottles, and the Chinaman’s groping hand closed on one of these. He struck viciously at Woodcott’s head with it, and on the third blow the bottle broke. The con-



tents streamed over Woodcott's head and face, but he kept on twisting. Bottle after bottle the Chinaman seized, and bottle after bottle was broken as the red-coat dodged them. Still Woodcott twisted until suddenly the knife fell to the floor.

"The Chinaman was brandishing another bottle, and would no doubt have struck home, but Woodcott did an amazing thing. The watchers at the windows who were literally suffering agonies of mirth at the spectacle of the fight, saw Woodcott suddenly turn from the furious Chinaman and run from the kitchen. He ran through the eating place with the Chinaman close on his heels, and never seemed to notice the men about him. Charlie let go with the bottle as Woodcott passed through the door, and then stood screaming and chattering with rage, hurling sugar bowls, oil and vinegar cruets, and even an inoffensive omelet after his enemy. At that moment Cunliffe, approaching the place, saw Woodcott's flight; was astonished at the approach of his badly disheveled comrade. Woodcott was a shocking mess.

"'Arrest him, will you?' Woodcott gasped as he stopped for a moment in his flight. 'Put that Chinaman under arrest. Do you mind?'

"And he was off to disappear almost immediately into the magistrate's office. Cunliffe, disgusted and troubled, rushed to the Palace Café, dodged a sugar bowl and some cornmeal mush, shouted sternly an



## THE LAST LAUGH

---

order to the men who filled the room, and as they seized the Chinaman, snapped on his manacles. The arrest was made.

"Cunliffe did not wait for Woodcott to show up again. He curtly commandeered the services of two burly loafers and gave over the Chinaman to their keeping. He rode at a walk beside them as they led the frightened prisoner back to the post.

"Meanwhile the story of that arrest flew about the town. Miraculously all Pipe Lake knew of Woodcott's shame. His name was on the lips of every loafer; and they spoke it with profane laughter, coarsely ridiculing the man who had run from a Chinaman.

" 'Flew out of the door,' they gloated. 'With Charlie throwing bottles after him. Lord, what a mess!'

"Cacelotte immediately made his way with pompous dignity to the magistrate's office, and found MacKellar at his desk. Woodcott was in the room also. The constable's tunic was torn and dark-stained with the water he had used to clean it. Otherwise he was as smart and as trimly impassive as ever. He held a folded paper in his hand.

"Cacelotte ignored him contemptuously.

" 'They've arrested Charlie Yung,' he said to the magistrate.

" 'Aye,' said MacKellar.

"Cacelotte wagged his head dolefully.

" 'A bad blow for the Force,' he said, deeply re-



gretful. 'They say the Policeman bungled the job badly. Charlie threw food all over him and he ran away. A visiting Constable, they tell me.'

" 'Uh!' grunted MacKellar slowly.

" 'You oughta been there, Constable.' Cachelotte leered at Woodcott, who calmly looked through him.

" 'What do you want in this place, Mr. Cachelotte?' asked MacKellar.

" 'Why,' said Cachelotte, coming to the point. 'The poor, misled Chinaman is a friend of mine. I'll go bail for him, Mr. MacKellar. Will ye bear that in mind? I should be glad to go bail for him.'

"Woodcott spoke up very clearly at that.

" 'I'm sorry, Cachelotte,' he said, seeming to examine the files on the other side of the Irishman. 'But you are hardly in a position to go bail for Charlie Yung. I have a warrant here for your arrest.'

"Cachelotte glared at him.

" 'Arrest!' he roared. 'Arrest! Me! Why, you white-livered puppy—'

" 'Anything you say may be used against you,' murmured Woodcott politely, and Cachelotte shut up.

" 'You ain't got nothing on me,' he rumbled.

" 'Will you come peaceably?' asked Woodcott.

"Cachelotte swore. This might be a bluff on Woodcott's part, or, still more precious thought, a bungling mistake—an arrest without evidence. If this was so,



he could break Woodcott; if he resisted, it was playing into the Policeman's hands.

"'What's the charge?' he asked, controlling the devil in him.

"'Selling whiskey in prohibited territory. Also under the Indian Act. Selling intoxicants to Indians.'

"Cacelotte grinned.

"'I'll go,' he said.

"So Woodcott and he walked out to the post together, while men murmured and small boys jeered the redcoat as he passed. Woodcott's expression did not alter.

"So quietly had Woodcott contrived and executed his arrest of Cacelotte that the town knew nothing of it until rumor spread it abroad and then no one believed it until the Irishman sent for Billy Cloudfoot, his Indian servant.

"This was the day after the fight at the Palace Café. Woodcott and Cunliffe had been up all the night questioning and cross-examining the Chinaman, and in the morning Woodcott himself came with irritating calm to bring Cacelotte his breakfast. Cacelotte, who was so angry that it positively hurt him, tried to shake the redcoat's calm by teasing him with the happenings of the day before; but Woodcott was imperturbable. He had a high standard of fair play, and it was like him to feel that the Irishman's predicament entitled him to a certain latitude of protest. So he listened courteously



while Cachelotte dwelt upon Charlie's prowess. Woodcott's serenity stung Cachelotte like a lash. He became abusive and arrogant. He sneered at the redcoat's demeanor, and became profane. He defied Woodcott or the Force or the Dominion Government to harm or to hold him. Woodcott coolly turned his back to leave the guardroom.

"'Charlie Yung has made a clean breast of it,' he said as he closed the door, and Cachelotte shut up. He knew now that Woodcott was on firm ground; dangerous ground for him. Later he asked to see Billy Cloudfoot. He wanted clothes, he said, and to make some arrangements of his affairs. Cunliffe objected to that, but Woodcott commanded the post; it was his affair, and he was strong for fair play. So Billy came out and got his orders.

"Now you wouldn't think that after the affair at Charlie's, Cunliffe would have had much in common with Woodcott, would you? Cunliffe had been pretty well disgusted at the showing Woodcott had made that day; but here they were only the day after the affair, hard at a game of tennis together. In the roadway outside the court and on the hill behind were little groups of citizens who gazed in astonishment at the scene, and were eager to see what turn the deeper game would take.

"Here was Woodcott defeated and humiliated by a Chinaman, yet in some mysterious way the captor of



## THE LAST LAUGH

---

Cacelotte himself, who had surrendered without a fight. No one knew on what charge Cacelotte was held. They only knew he was the prisoner of this redcoat who played tennis in the face of his disgrace, and in the face of the most dangerous man on the border. The general opinion had it that Woodcott had arrested Cacelotte in anger and without evidence; but almost all knew what Charlie Yung could betray.

“The two Constables played tennis excellently. It was a fast game and many of the spectators became deeply interested in the splendid grace of the players, and the sharp salvos of the racket blows. Cunliffe had played at McGill for the Varsity, but Woodcott had played for Brazenose at Oxford and had been runner up for a national championship. They both played a good game and held the attention of the spectators, so that Billy Cloudfoot came to the hillside behind the guard house unnoticed. The redskin took his position well up on the hillside and stood there, waiting with a blanket drawn tightly over his shoulders. He had not long to wait.

“The tennis went merrily on. Woodcott had Cunliffe jumping all over the court, strenuously on the defensive. Cunliffe missed the ball by a hair's breadth, and Woodcott walked around the net. ‘My game,’ he said coolly. Cunliffe took the court nearest the house, so that in play his back would be against it. Picking



up the balls he faced the house, and suddenly cried out:

“‘Cacelotte’s out!’ he yelled, and Woodcott saw the prisoner, who had broken from the guard house, running up the hill toward Billy Cloudfoot.

“Cunliffe, as I have said, knew the border and the men of Cacelotte’s type. He knew that this was an affair for guns, and made a bee line for the house. Woodcott, however, made his bee line for Cacelotte. He neatly hurdled the tennis net, and armed with his racquet made swiftly up the hill. Some one shouted a warning to Cacelotte, and he glanced back, seeing his pursuer. Then he increased his speed and reached Billy’s side with Woodcott close upon his heels. The Indian threw back his blanket and Cacelotte, as though by magic, had a rifle in his hand. He turned in his tracks and fired. Woodcott, running at his best speed, could not stop, but struck the barrel of the rifle a blow with his racquet as he came rushing by the Irishman. Up went the gun as the cartridge exploded, and Woodcott, sliding with the impetus of his run, as a ball player slides home, caught Cacelotte’s legs in his arms, and they were both down with a crash. But Cacelotte held the gun. Woodcott seized it as the furious man shoved the muzzle at him, and pushed the barrel up. Then with the two of them on their knees, all Pipe Lake gathered about to see the end of the game. The end they had hoped for. A test between these two men.



## THE LAST LAUGH

---

“Cacelotte, his face distorted with fury, was every inch the bad man; and Woodcott, closely facing him, only broke his accustomed serenity with a determined frown. Cacelotte, with a hand at the trigger and one on the barrel, struggled to bring down the muzzle of the gun. If he did he would blow Woodcott well nigh in two. Woodcott, with a hand at the muzzle and one near the stock despite his calm strove mightily to keep that muzzle up until Cunliffe should arrive. As they put forth all the strength in them, it seemed plain that Woodcott must lose. They rose gradually from their knees as Cacelotte exerted his superior upward force. They stood there taut and unmoving, surrounded by the silent crowd. Only the sweat on Woodcott’s brow, the distortion of the Irishman’s face, betrayed the terrific struggle. Then Billy Cloudfoot, going mad, leaped on Woodcott from behind, clutching his throat; and Cunliffe coming up breathless at that moment tore him off, and struggled to pinion him. Woodcott, needing all his strength, was handicapped by that attack. Gradually, in spite of him, the muzzle came down in his hand, the stock of the rifle was moving slowly up!

“Little by little; by fractions of an inch the spectators saw the stock come up. Down and down came the muzzle until it touched Woodcott’s shirt. It seemed that Cacelotte must fire. Why did not Woodcott move, dodge, take a new hold? He did not; but more amaz-



ing still, he smiled! Straining every muscle, every fiber of his body, he resisted Cacerlotte's effort to move that muzzle down the last necessary fraction of an inch; and while he did it, he smiled! The muscles bunched on Cacerlotte's throat and shoulders. This would be the final effort. Cunliffe would be upon him in a second. With all his great strength he pulled up on the stock of the rifle, and Woodcott smiling, suddenly let go. There was a mighty crack as the stock flew up and met Cacerlotte's jaw. The big man staggered back, his jaw bone splintered, and Woodcott took the rifles from his hands as though from the hands of an infant.

"Cunliffe, leaving Billy, outstretched upon the ground counting stars, snapped a pair of manacles on the dazed ruffian, and the game was over. Woodcott had won. His prize was respect, and admiration and fear, where contempt, dislike and opposition had been. Pipe Lake began to brag of its new Constable.

"They brought Cacerlotte, Charlie and the ardent Billy Cloudfoot up for trial and they were all packed off to prison. It developed during the trial that Cacerlotte had become desperate when he found out that Charlie Yung had confessed to the redcoats. But Charlie couldn't help it. Cacerlotte should not have counseled him to resist the Force. In resisting Woodcott he had struck him with the catsup bottles, and those bottles, painted red to resemble catsup, contained whis-



## THE LAST LAUGH

---

key. It was in this manner Cachelotte distributed his wares; and Woodcott, seeing that, had made his way directly to MacKellar for his warrant. Charlie was not important then; Cachelotte had to be taken before he left town.

“But we are getting from our story. My story is of Woodcott. This was his first adventure in popularity. Before his long battle with Cachelotte he had never considered his fellowmen except as they were worth knowing or not worth knowing. After he had looked at death in Cachelotte’s distorted face, and gathered the fruits of his victory in the admiration of his fellows, he learned to go farther afield in search of friendship; and he found it in most unexpected places. His reserve clung to him, however, and he has always been most useful among Indians for that reason. It is peculiar that the refinement and pride which made him so slow to make friends should have found its match in the pride of the redman who will befriend no man who has not proved himself a man.

“Woodcott owes a great deal to Cachelotte in a way.”



## CHAPTER XIII

MAD!

THEY sat in the shelter of a lean-to on the river bank and listened to the rain. The rain makes a peculiar, enchanting noise in the woods at night. Snug and dry, about a comfortable fire, it is pleasant to listen to it rattling upon the leaves, hissing on the surface of the water, and spattering upon the soft woodland ground. So they did, and when the story came, it seemed as though these were the best conditions in all the world for the presence of a man like Renfrew.

"It was a queer idea Greenmason had," said Renfrew. "And as it developed he was not equal to it. It is an interesting reflection that if Stedman at Vermilion could only have known it, the greatest adventure of his life really started when Greenmason, against the advice of every trapper and woodsman at the post, started north from Fort St. John, nearly a thousand miles away.

"Greenmason was a doctor, and he had some influenza pills of his own invention which he felt would



be an inestimable boon to the Indians and trappers of the North. I suppose he was lured by the adventure, too. Anyway, he set out from Fort St. John in September with an inadequate outfit to sell his ridiculous pills throughout the wilderness. He explained to every one who endeavored to dissuade him that travel in the North wasn't as hard as they thought it was, and felt that his judgment was proved correct when he arrived safely at Fort Nelson with nearly half of his pills sold to Indians and half-breeds who liked the taste of the sugar coating on them.

"At Fort Nelson though, he seemed to feel some hint of what faced him in the rigors of an Arctic winter. Anyway, with the first freezing of the water he scuttled away for the South and tried to make Peace River Landing across country. He traveled with an extremely illiterate half-breed whose name was Olivier, and the first snows overtook them near the head waters of the Mackenzie just over the Alberta line. From what Olivier had to say afterward it appeared that Greenmason entirely lost his head at this event. The ominous hint of the relentless forces which were to follow this first flurry of snow frightened the tender-foot badly. He gave up all attempt to journey further south and sought frantically for shelter. He found it in a group of three deserted cabins on the Boyer River. They were the wretched shelters of some unknown



trappers who had passed on, for heaven knows what reason, to heaven knows where.

“Against the loud but unintelligible protest of Olivier, who was superstitious and feared everything he did not understand, which was much, but who was nevertheless alive to the terrible urgency of beating south, Greenmason decided to occupy one of these cabins ‘until the snows passed by,’ he said. And they did, laying in a vast store of wood and provisions, wasting time they should have spent in traveling south, until the winter, gray and terrible came down and imprisoned them.

“The cabin which Greenmason chose to make his winter quarters was square and squat. Greenmason was not an excessively tall man, yet his head scraped the rude rafters which supported the roof. Olivier battered his head upon them in a manner which would have seriously injured any less sturdy cranium, until he learned to walk with a furtive stoop. The cabin windows were merely chinks in the wall, and to defeat the winter weather they covered these with skins. Later the snow packed up about the windows and they became useless, as did the doorway. So the cabin became pitch black, lit only by the insignificant glow of the fire which they kept burning incessantly in the fireplace at one end of the hut. Had it not been for the call which this made upon them for wood, it is quite probable that the two men would have died for



lack of air. As it was they had periodically to dig their way out from the fetid atmosphere of the hut for brief fuel-gathering sallies into the woods. As time went on this duty was left entirely to Olivier. For Greenmason could not stand the intolerable life of the cabin. He sickened.

“They sat in the darkness and smoke of that horrible interior half buried in snow without any variation from a diet of frozen dried meat, cornmeal and bacon. They could not talk with one another, neither understanding the other’s language. They had no cards nor even a book to read. They could only sit, or lie, or pace up and down in the foul air and darkness, and listen to the dismal noises of the wolves and foxes all about them. So Greenmason sickened and went mad—he lost his mind——

“As far as Olivier was concerned, that was enough. For him the adventure was over. He had found little to complain of in the life of the cabin. It had not been so very different from his own home in the winter-time. But when Greenmason mouthed and mumbled to himself as he paced the frozen floor, and turned upon him with a strange glare in his eyes and raved of spring in England, Olivier decided it was time to leave. He packed his things and set out for Vermilion, terrified. And that is how Stedman came into the story.

“Stedman was stationed at Vermilion with Sergeant



Meadows when this happened. He was a big man and impressed me more with his sheer strength than any other man I have ever met. This I think was due to the manner of his build, which was unusual. He had the compact, chunky body of the exceedingly strong, short man; but he was over six foot four in length. He gave an impression of tremendous strength, and in his work he had reason to prove his possession of it often.

“He combined with his physical power a rare modesty and good nature. His calm acceptance of the strength he had was extraordinary. He was a matter-of-fact man, and to him his strength was matter-of-fact. His clean shaven, rather square face, beamed with humor if one remarked upon his powers. It amused him. Occasionally his naïve modesty furnished rare amusement.

“When, soon after he had joined the Force, he was on duty along the Boundary Line, he had written a notable report.

“ ‘On the 17th inst., I, Constable Stedman, was called to the hotel to quiet a disturbance,’ he had written. ‘I found the room full of cowboys, and a man named Tiernan or ‘Cowboy Jack’ was carrying a gun, and pointed it at me against sections 105 and 109 of the Criminal Code. We struggled. Finally I got him handcuffed behind and put him inside. His head being in bad shape I had to engage the services of a



doctor. All of which I have the honor to report.' And another hand had added to the report a list of things damaged, which included a broken door, a smashed screen, a broken chair, a field jacket worn by Stedman spoiled by being covered with blood, walls spattered with blood, and, I believe, a china cabinet shattered.

" 'We struggled,' Stedman had written. 'And finally I got him handcuffed.' Can you imagine what happened between 'we struggled' and 'finally?'

"That is the sort of man Stedman was.

"He had become a great power in the upper Athabasca district, after four years of remarkable work with Sergeant Meadows who was a remarkable officer, when Olivier came into Vermilion with news of Greenmason's madness. Meadows had just returned from a long patrol and he heard Olivier with a great deal of concern. For this was early December and winter was sweeping through the North. It comes with the turbulence and frightfulness of an invading army. Before its coming the country is fair and travel through it is a pleasant and fine adventure. After it has passed the country is a barren waste and travel is rigorous and full of dangers. But the most terrible dangers beset the man who traverses the country while it is sweeping on its way.

"Meadows knew that only one man—Stedman—could go on this journey, for he himself had to keep



the post. The police dogs were used by the patrol from which they had just returned and were not to be depended upon. So Stedman must venture forth with a hired team to rescue Greenmason and carry the madman down to Fort Saskatchewan, six hundred miles away. It is no wonder that Sergeant Meadows was concerned. But the thing had to be done; and so it was.

"Stedman set forth with a hired team of dogs which was precariously light and slim of numbers; and he took Olivier with him as guide. He could do no better, for speed was their best ally and no one could guide him as quickly as Olivier to the shelter where Greenmason lay. But Stedman later paid heavily for his choice of a traveling companion.

"They found Greenmason crouching in a corner of the hut tearing at a chunk of frozen meat as an animal tears at its food. He fought them when they entered the horrible shelter, and Stedman obtained a glimpse of what his journey was to be as he struggled to encase the maniac in a sleeping bag and warm robes, and then to lash him on the sleigh. Olivier gave little assistance. He shrank from Greenmason as a young child shrinks from the shadow which the candle flings, and there was the same look of wild wonderment in his eyes.

"If you look at your maps you will see an elbow in the Peace River where it turns from a straight



course northward to make its way east to Lake Athabasca. From a point a little north of this elbow Stedman set out with his maniac to make southeast by east, aiming for the Rat which he would follow to the Wabiskaw, and thence take to that great highway of ice, southbound.

"The first day out was a grim introduction to a grim journey. As Stedman would have remarked, 'We struggled.' Only this time it was not with a man. They followed Long Creek nine miles down to the Boyer River, and slush lay on the ice. The slush froze to their snowshoes and when the weight of it became unendurable, they stopped to thaw them out. It froze on the dog's feet, too, and when the lumps of ice between their toes hurt them the animals rolled over, holding their paws up straightlegged for relief. And the painful journey stopped while the men picked the ice out with their teeth. The sled was heavy with the weight of its passenger added to the duffle and provisions—

"They made only the nine miles of creek that day, and when they reached the Boyer River and made their camp, Stedman thought soberly of the journey he had undertaken. Yet that night a thing occurred which made his burden the heavier.

"He had arranged watches for the night with Olivier, and during the half-breed's watch, he was asleep. A pounding upon his chest awakened him, and he found



Olivier crouching at his side. In his left hand the half-breed held a flaming brand, and he stared into the night with wild terror in his eyes, the while he thumped Stedman with his right. Stedman drew himself from his sleeping bag, and followed Olivier's frightened gaze. Something near by was moving and writhing in the darkness, dim lit by the smouldering fire. Some thought of wolves occurred to Stedman; but as his eyes became accustomed to the dark, he saw Greenmason writhing on the ground beside the sled, writhing and twisting to free himself from his bonds. And Olivier crouched brandishing his torch, afraid of demons.

"Greenmason's face, distorted with the fury of madness, was horrible as the dim firelight caught his reddened eyes and the foam on his lips. He fought his bonds with his whole body and with his teeth, whipping himself about like a man in convulsions. Stedman had to use rough methods to put him to bed again, and after that he himself kept watch. Remembering Olivier's fear, he knew that he must see this business through alone. And they were only on the threshold of it.

"There followed several days of travel which was made comparatively easy by mild weather and a well-packed trail. But following his outburst of the night which showed up Olivier's fear, the madman refused to eat, and every meal time was the scene of a horrible



encounter between Stedman and his charge. He had to force the food down Greenmason's throat—And at night he dared not sleep more than what furtive naps were forced upon him by fatigue.

“Then came the blizzard. They had won their way to the Wabiskaw when the heavy snowfall overtook them. They traveled all morning through it, and pushed on till it blinded them and only the heavy timber on the banks of the river marked the trail for them. The wind changed as they groped their way forward in this manner, and you should hear Stedman tell of how the blizzard came. ‘I felt it,’ he says simply. He felt it in the air, and they made for the timber. He felt it so soon before it hit them that they had time to prepare a meal and while they ate it the dogs, whimpering, entrenched themselves wisely in the snow.

“It came down upon them with a terrific noise; a wild howling of the gale down the river, a shrieking of wind in the woods, and the crash of great trees snapped off like matchsticks in the hurricane. Stedman threw the sled barrierwise against a widespread fir tree, and with a mighty gesture he dragged Greenmason with him behind this shelter. Buttressed by low-hanging branches the sled took the blast of the gale and held, but Stedman, braced against the trunk of the tree, had to exert all his strength to prevent Greenmason being tumbled away over the snow like a bundle of clothes in the great wind. Still braced against the



tree, and clutching the madman's clothes wherever he could find a hold, he managed to lash the man to the tree, and this done he lashed himself as well.

"All night they lay there buffeted by a gale which at forty below zero swept westward with a speed of eighty miles an hour. Its very fury built them a barrier later of snow piled high against the sled, and in the shelter of this Stedman put his maniac to bed as a strong nurse does a fretful child. It was a labor for Hercules. For Stedman it was routine. Then Greenmason and he, lashed to the tree in their sleeping bags, sought sleep, which never came.

"That blizzard lasted two days and two nights without abating in its fury, and all that time the two lived crouching together in their scanty shelter, one man with the firm resolution of perfect strength, and the other with the light of madness in his eyes, seeing indescribable things in the flying snow.

"When Stedman dug their way out, he found Olivier, who had fended for himself, sullenly lighting a fire. From the sounds he made Stedman gathered that he believed the demon which Greenmason entertained had brought the blizzard and had brought fear and destruction to the half-breed's simple mind as well. Stedman knew that if Olivier dared he would leave for the nearest settlement alone. But Stedman was a sturdy rock to cling to in weather which demons had invoked.



“The thing which Stedman remembers most in the days which followed was the great depths of the snow-drifts in the river, and the storms of wind which swept the cutting snow into their faces and made a swirling mist of it through which they pushed interminably, stopping only for their terrible routine—mealtimes when Greenmason must be forced to eat; camps at eveningtide when Greenmason must be released for a little so that he might keep the blood running through his body, and when he must be keenly watched against escape while Olivier shrank back from his mad gaze; and nights which for Stedman had only a torturing pretense of sleep, in brief and troubled ways.

“One day Greenmason escaped. There came a time when food could no longer be forced down his throat and there were several sickening encounters at mealtimes on the trail; attempts to nourish him which resulted in revolting failures. After one of these occasions Stedman set the man free and his bonds loosened, he fell upon the dried meat before him like an animal. After that Stedman freed him at mealtimes until a day came when, camp made, Stedman was gathering fuel in the woods, and Greenmason took advantage of his absence to fight out a fanciful grudge which he bore one of the dogs. Knowing what an injured dog might mean, Olivier interfered and was promptly set upon. Stedman, his arms full of wood, was well nigh run down by the frantic half-breed as he stumbled



shrieking, through the snow with Greenmason brandishing a club behind him. Brought suddenly face to face with Stedman, the maniac halted, burst into a howl of terrible laughter, and hurling the club at Stedman turned in full flight for the river. Stedman dropped his burden and followed him. Despite his fasting and long confinement, Greenmason made surprising headway through the drifted snow and Stedman, the heavier man, saw himself outdistanced as he wallowed painfully behind him. There followed a struggle. Greenmason fought desperately for his freedom and Stedman was forced to choke his senses from him. Then he carried him back; after the great exertion of the chase, and the danger of the desperate encounter in the yielding snow. He stumbled back with him. 'I am a pretty strong man,' Stedman said when he told me of it. 'But in the wind and the numbing cold it was really a difficult job to carry him that half-mile back to camp.'

"And the maniac froze a foot. Afterward the care of that frozen foot was added to the dreadful routine of the journey, and the pain of it was the source of indescribable ravings in the night.—This story is stretching into a very long one. Are you tired?—Very well, then—

"As they came into the wooded lands to the south, game became quite plentiful, and it was a tremendous relief to vary the torturing monotony of the trail with



an occasional hunt. Though it is an interesting reflection that many experienced woodsmen would have found a journey into that country in that season merely for the hunting, an adventure which would have tried their utmost strength, Stedman found it a pastime. The fresh meat helped, too, but with the game came wolves. The lean timber wolf in wintertime discriminates very little in its choice of food, whether it be animal or man. Fear of the beast brought Olivier, furtive and sullen, more closely into camp with the madman; and with Stedman, he sat up through the long nights keeping the watch fires bright while the wolf pack howled in the woods about them. Those were weird watches for the silent, sleepless redcoat, but he will tell you nothing of what he thought as he sat in his sorely tried strength of mind and body by the red fires in the night. He might have wondered what the end was going to be. It was a precarious business, but I don't believe that doubt ever entered his mind.

"They now entered a country of open prairie land, spotted with clumps of sparse woodland and they wound their way through a network of creeks and little rivers toward the Athabasca. At Old House they picked up a guide, for Stedman now planned a drive straight south over a country which had no trails. He was eager to see the end of the journey. This addition to their party made their labors lighter. They



made good time and came into Lac la Biche on the last day of the year.

"Stedman arranged for horses at Lac la Biche. From this point he could drive with his maniac over the prairie roads to Fort Saskatchewan. He felt that his journey was well nigh done; that at Lac la Biche he could rest. But that night Olivier revealed himself.

"Stedman slept in the same room as his maniac, enjoying what Spartan hospitality the settlement had to offer. He slept profoundly, despite the groaning and mouthing of his room-mate, who, strapped to his bed, made a poor business of giving words to his delirium since his tongue was frozen in his mouth. Olivier came up to take his turn at watchman in that uncanny sick room at about twelve o'clock in the night. I remember that midnight was the hour Stedman had arranged for a change of watch.

"I can't pretend to explain what moved in the half-breed's mind as he sat there. He knew that, unknown to the authorities, the half-breed settlement across the bay of the lake was celebrating the New Year that night with forbidden liquors; and perhaps it was the childish desire of a weak mind to join in the festivities which impelled him to commit his crime. For my part, I cannot help but think he had come to his watch with the best of intentions to keep it faithfully, but that Greenmason, the madman, twisting in his bonds, rattling with his frozen tongue, must have worked



upon his mind. Else why did he wait to come on watch at all?

“Let me give you a word of how the madman looked at that time. I have it from Stedman who describes him as he put him to bed that night. Greenmason was a slight man of merely average height, and his lean face was scantily adorned with an exceedingly thin gray beard. His gray hair was very thin as well. His terrible adventure had withered the flesh upon his face so that it appeared as though the ashen skin was stretched over a naked skull, and the eyes burned uncannily in great hollows under his brows. The thin gray hair which covered his face suggested horribly the hair on something dead. Altogether this round head twisting and rolling upon the scrawny neck resembled the grotesque masks which are shown in museums or upon poles outside the palisades of the head hunters. It was terrible to see the mask mouth and mumble and cry out. To catch a glimpse of the eternal suffering in the wild eyes was disquieting to a simple mind.

“Olivier sat his watch about a half hour, then he searched through Stedman's clothes, took all the money he could find in them, and left for the settlement across the bay of the lake where music and red whiskey were. Greenmason worked his way free after Olivier had gone and Stedman was awakened rudely with the madman's claws at his throat. He struggled; and put his



maniac to bed again. Then his pent nerves burst in a tremendous rage. He awakened the house and a large part of the settlement. All the half-breeds and Indians and an occasional white man, too, trembled at his great anger. And it raged until some miserable metis informed him of the celebration across the lake. Then the big redcoat laid a heavy hand upon Albret Sansebear who was his host.

"Watch Greenmason," he roared. "Keep a close watch on him till I return, or by the Saint Mary you'll go to Regina with me in the morning!" Then he took to his snowshoes and was off upon the heels of Olivier, the thief.

"The music and the drink were both full blast when Stedman threw open the door of the meeting house at Black Portage, which was the settlement across the bay of the lake. He made directly over to Olivier and seized him by the shoulder with the same anger in his face which had dismayed the people at Lac la Biche. But Olivier had a new courage. He had found it in a bottle and he was misled by it. He resisted Stedman, striking out with his long arms and cursing wildly in the patois. Stedman did not know what the curses were, but he understood what they meant, and Olivier's blows were unmistakable. Also the half-breed twisted in his grip like a frantic fox in a trap. He twisted and squirmed and fought in the redcoat's grip; and there were the blows. So Stedman struck



him. It was an intelligent blow, and a heavy one. Olivier relaxed. He became unconscious and Stedman threw him over one shoulder and made for the door. But the excited circle about him would not have it.

“Stedman plunged forward but his opponents were full of the courage which had so tricked Olivier. It is of no use to argue with semi-savages when they are drunk. To fight them would mean to become a target for a hundred knives and then hanging would follow. Stedman dropped Olivier, and strode through the clattering crowd to the door. He recrossed the lake; twelve weary miles in the bitter blackness of the morning, and went to sleep again.

“At eleven the next day he found it terribly hard to turn out. He was tired in a way which you fellows perhaps will never know. His brain, his body, his every nerve was tired—tired.—Of all the things Stedman ever did, rising that morning was perhaps one of the bravest of them. Death itself seemed preferable to turning out in the numbing cold and dressing for the arduous duty he had to perform. But he did it.

“He dragged himself out, and suffered extraordinary agony as he dressed himself. He nearly fell asleep several times as he did so. His body cried out for it; his brain was like a man who is caught in a quicksand. But he overcame his weariness without losing it and made his way across the lake once more



in the teeth of a cruel wind, and arrested Olivier, and the ringleader of the Metis who had resisted him. Sober and scared, they were easily subdued. He brought them back with him, and with his maniac he loaded them on the wagon—

“I won’t dwell on the incidents of the journey to the Fort. The jolts of the wagon, and the treacherous nature of his captive forbade any sleep for Stedman although wakefulness was torture now. And often all had to turn out and help free the wagon from the snow. It lasted three days.

“When the party arrived at Fort Saskatchewan, Greenmason was turned over to the hospital authorities, a raving, living corpse, and Stedman took his prisoners to the jail. Seven months after that Greenmason was pronounced cured, and freed minus a few toes, for which he had to thank his frostbite. It is an evidence of his restored sanity that he later went to sell his pills in South America where they were successful as a cure for malaria.

“But for Stedman the end of the adventure had not yet come. After he had placed his prisoners in jail there was a long report to write. Then, for sixteen hours he slept. It seems that on one of the occasions during his trip when he had ‘struggled’ several of his teeth had been injured, and after his sleep he visited the dentist who tortured him further. Then, all alone, he set out for Vermilion again, and at Smoky Lake,



## MAD!

---

the end of his adventure overtook him. The strain of brain and body had been too great. The splendor of his power had been overtaxed. He went mad, and at his lone camp fire was found singing plaintively the songs of his native Devonshire.

"They took him back to Fort Saskatchewan and placed him at Brandon where Greenmason was—so in the end they came together in a sad, strange way—

"Stedman went back to England after he was released, but he could not stay there. He returned to America and enlisted again in the Force. He serves a routine duty in the southern district now, and he wonders why he cannot go into the North again—back to Vermilion. You have only to look into his eyes and listen to his speech to know why. His experience left its mark upon him."

They sat listening to the rain—

"There are things in the spirit of a man which are not close to the earth," Renfrew said. "Things which the world can't give or take away. The spirit which carried Stedman through that journey was an evidence of it."



## CHAPTER XIV

### NEAR TO THE END

WHEN the cloudburst came, it found the Explorers pressing along a dirt road, making all the haste which mud and rain and the darkness would permit to reach the shelter of civilization.

Since the first rising of the Marapo in the heavy rain which had fallen for two days, Renfrew had foreseen this occasion and had planned for it. The Explorers had pushed down the river in a growing rush of water and the night before the cloudburst had reached the ford. Here they had cached their canoes bottom side up high on the river bank, for Renfrew knew that soon the Marapo was to be a raging torrent, rising every minute and carrying derelict logs and whole trees in its boiling current; then they had thrown up a lean-to and snatched what sleep they could. At dawn Renfrew had them up for a hurried breakfast which he had arranged the preceding evening, and with their packs on their backs, the Explorers splashed and slithered through the mud, to follow the



dirt road from the ford six miles through the woods to the state road which followed the Hamilton River to Walney.

As they scrambled along holding close to Renfrew, who under a burden of many packs set a merry pace, the black clouds gathered above and seemed to bear down upon them. And the light of the rising sun was defeated by the storm so that only a murky gloaming lit the morning. They trudged on, long since careless of mudholes and the water which ran in little rivers on the road, and felt that this must last forever. The state road, it seemed, would never come; and the dark menace of the sky was close upon their heads.

Then the clouds burst.

The rain which had been drizzling upon them for two days suddenly became pelting, punishing water. Each boy saw his companions become obscured by a curtain of teeming rain. It struck them like a cold shower, beating heavily down. It soaked them immediately and so thoroughly that they felt naked and weighted with the water. It blinded them and filled their nostrils, poured into their gasping mouths. The sound of rushing waters filled their ears. They saw the trees bent down with it, and miraculously the banks of the road melted into fluid and slid downward into the road. Suddenly the water was ankle deep in the roadway, and the ground under their feet was moving



as the banks of the road had moved, melting beneath them.

Renfrew shouted so that they could hear him above the tumult, and a line was passed among them. Then he led them, slowly, and stumbling and gasping in the deluge up the crumbling banks, while they slipped and wallowed in the liquid mud. Up to a wooded knoll they made their way with a great effort, and precariously, till they felt that the ground although slippery was firm under their feet. And they gathered under a broad maple tree to regain their breath.

There they waited for the deluge to spend its fury while they watched rivulets form about them. Trickling water which became rivulets; rivulets which became miniature torrents; torrents which washed out gullies, cataracts and channels, and rushed to join the river in the roadway. All around them they could see in miniature the process whereby oceans are made, and some could even feel a youthful ocean growing deep about their feet.

When the pelting of the rain was subdued, and the friendly drizzle of the earlier morning returned to take its place, the boys came down from the hill to the edge of the road and opened their eyes wide at the damage which had been wrought. The bank of the road had really disappeared and they stood upon the sharp edge of a washout. Where the road had been were twin streams of muddy water separated by a



ing velocity as the slope of the road increased.

ridge of red mud and these swept noisily along, gain-

The roadway was impassable, but the black clouds had wasted their substance and had given place to a gray heaven which glowed brazenly in the east and permitted a pale light to fall on a saturated world. So, climbing the hill, the Explorers gathered beneath the maple tree again with a certain satisfaction that they were playing a heroic part; pioneering and exploring amid unusual hardships, and discussing a map with Renfrew under a dripping tree, as field marshals without number, had, no doubt, done before them. Renfrew laid out a compass course now, and having explained to the boys the importance of approximating it in their journey, and how this must be done by the almost indiscernible shadow cast by the sun, he led them forth, cutting through wet woodland trails which sloped always downward. They were leaving the mountains and approaching the valley of the Hamilton.

Thus, in the mid-afternoon, they stood on a hilltop in the unabating rain, and with their backs to the hills gazed upon the swift, swollen waters of the Hamilton River with the gray state road beside it. More welcome than the muddy waters, which moved in so stately a manner, however, was the house which lay in the hollow directly beneath them, for they were wet and chilled; had been whipped by wet underbrush along



miles of slippery and uneven forest trails; and they were tired and hungry and cold. They wanted to explore no more. They were weary of being woodsmen and pioneers and field marshals. They wanted warmth now, and food; and they longed to be dry.

They looked down upon the little house which stood impudently upon an eminence overlooking the road and the river beyond it. They wondered what their reception would be, and swept down the hill like an avenging horde while they wondered. They passed the big barn behind the house, and the melancholy hound which cringed at its door in full cry, and bore down upon the kitchen door furiously. The door opened before they reached it and a tall cowboy who seemed to have stepped out from a Remington print stood on the little porch and peered at them.

"Glory be!" said the cowboy as the boys drew up, wondering. "Looks like it's gonna rain boys an' nigger babies for a spell."

Renfrew came up from the rear.

"Hello, Dakota!" he cried. "Got lots of fire to dry these youngsters out with?" Then he turned to the boys. "Fellows, meet my friend Dakota Dan! He's one of our most prominent horsemen. Dan, these are the Explorers."

"Right glad to know yer, boys," declared Dakota Dan. "Come in, come in. You all certainly is a lot wet."



And in another ten minutes the Explorers clad in the costume of their nativity were gathered about a stove with a red-hot base, and scrubbing their chilled bodies with Dakota's stiff towels until they fairly glowed. Meanwhile Dakota, up above, rummaged about for blankets and these he hurled down through a trap door so that blankets descended like thunderbolts from a clear sky and extinguished completely the unfortunate Explorers who happened to be underneath. After he had hurled his thunderbolts home Dakota would yell, "Stand from under!" in a smothered voice, and would be heard to stamp away in search of further ammunition. Then wrapped in dusty blankets, sheets and curtains which, roped about their scanty waists gave most of the Explorers an appearance of primitive manhood, they dined on flapjacks and bacon, canned apricots and coffee, while their clothes steamed about the stove.

Dakota Dan made the flapjacks and fried the bacon. With a facility achieved through long practice, he opened can after can of apricots, of which he seemed to possess an inexhaustible supply, and kept up a running comment in a detached manner which pleased the Explorers tremendously.

It was through Dakota's commentaries and Renfrew's brief explanations that the boys, putting two and two together, found out what the cowboy was. Physically, he was a tall, wiry individual with a lean,



brown face and black hair which cried out for a barber's shears. He was clad in a flannel shirt of amazing green and scarlet plaid, corduroy trousers with a belt of plaited leather, and high-heeled boots which were adorned with intricate designs in the leather, and gigantic Spanish spurs with glistening brass chains. His easy, good humor spoke of a laziness which was reflected in the manner of his housekeeping, and in the untidiness of his personal appearance.

"Bad weather for business, eh, Dan?" said Renfrew.

"Shore is," said Dan. "Bill, though, he's over to the stodio. Shore is worth a lot to look as ornery as Bill. They're usin' him to play a ape man now. Me, I don't get nothin' but hold-up men an' such like. Held up the Sacramento stage four times last week 'cause the heeroween couldn't recollect what costoom she'd wore in the stodio set."

"How are the ponies?"

"Good," said Dan. And then he missed the flap-jack he was flapping which fell onto the stove, and he swore and scraped it off. "Good," he repeated. "Only they get a little mite frisky all shut up like they've been lately. That there Sorghum, he's fit to buck me through the roof when I ride him again. He certainly is the fightinest hoss—sell him to a surcuss some day."

Renfrew explained to the boys that Dakota Dan, who was a famous buckaroo in his native state, had come East with a string of ponies which he rented out



with his own services to the motion picture people at Fort Leighton, up the river. He found it a profitable business.

"Got forty-five dollars a month on the old 'JJ' ranch," he said. "Like to break my neck ten times a day bustin' broncos. Here now, I get mor'n that in one day fer lettin' them movie doods ride 'em."

Renfrew, it seems, had met Dan in his rides about the country and found a common touch with him in reminiscences of the West, and as the afternoon passed by the boys sat about in their absurd apparel and profited by those same reminiscences. Dakota referred very often to one whose name was Bill. Bill, it seemed, was his partner and he described him as a "Horse rasler" who was ugly as all get out. In spite of the riches which his association with the movie "doods" yielded him, it was plain that Dan yearned heartily for the life of the open prairie once more.

"Shucks!" he exclaimed. "This here rain! It'll keep up forever, seems like. Now in the Spring Butte country you wouldn't no more see anything like this yere—not if you was to live there till cows ate shoe leather. Shucks!"

Then, considering the economic scheme of things: "Seems like we wasn't never worried none out there." He waved his arm in a sweeping, generous indication of all out doors. "We didn't get no more jack than would cover a N'York small steak. Forty-five dollars



a month is what I got on the 'JJ' an' my keep. Which I wasn't figurin' none on makin' any kick either. Now these birds down to the silk mills; they get all of twenty-five a week, an' what do they do? Why, they lays claim to the fact that that ain't even a grub stake an' they get up an' go on strike. Shucks! I can see a picture all colored up vivid of a strike on the 'JJ.' "

He chuckled pleasantly.

"Is there a strike at Hamilton?" Alan asked.

"Strike?" Dan brought his long legs down to earth and his chair came down with a clatter. "Where've you all been? You win, there's a strike at Hamilton. Them slaves of toil are like to tear the roof off the town most any day. The state police are hoppin' about real reckless."

"They went on strike a couple of years ago," said Bub Currie. "Alan and I were down at Hamilton when the strike was on. They all wanted to ride the street cars for nothing and they had some great old fights."

"We saw one fight," said Alan. "All the workmen crowded onto one car and when they tried to start it without them they pulled down the trolley pole and the car had to wait. It was great fun."

"These fellers ain't worryin' none about trolley cars," proclaimed Dakota. "They aim to tear things up real promiscuous. If the mill operators don't come



across right quick I reckon there'll be some fireworks down to Hamilton."

And the fireside talk ran on while the clothes dried and the Explorers dressed themselves, so that supper-time came and found them unprepared.

Large quantities of milk were needed, and butter. Also it was discovered that the Explorers craved ham and eggs, and Dakota's supply of canned apricots was low. So a council was held and it was decided by Dakota himself that he would harness up a buggy and drive down to the crossroads store for the provisions. While they awaited his return ghost stories passed around the circle which was gathered about the stove, and the long, low room, black shadowed by the inadequate light of the lamp, made a fit setting for them. The rude manner in which they were terminated was fitting, too.

From a place far off in the darkness and rain outside came a clamor of hoarse shouts which rang out wildly in the night for a space and were followed by a deathly silence. Then came the thud of hoofs beating fast in the mud; hoofbeats which rapidly approached the house.

Renfrew arose and looked upon the startled circle. "Sit still," he said, and left them. They heard him walk to the back of the house as the hoof beats thundered past the window. They felt the cool air sweep in as he flung open the door, and heard the splashing



of the rain outside. Then a deep, hoarse voice rumbled out a stream of reckless oaths. "—— horse thieves!" they heard exclaimed with an accompaniment of livid adjectives.

"Talk clean or shut up!" It was Renfrew's voice, very sharp and crisp. "There's a cargo of boys aboard," they heard him add. A door slammed and he entered the room, followed by the profane horseman.

"Daw gorn!" exclaimed that individual as he stepped into the light. And a number of the boys started up in cold horror when they saw his terrible face. It was the dark face of a gorilla crowned with a wild array of straw-colored hair, and a cut on the man's cheek smeared it hideously with blood. Unconscious of his terrifying appearance, he grinned and made it worse.

"I shouldn't a-spoke that-a-way," he rumbled. "Only they made me mad." Very amiably he revealed a savage set of teeth and most of his gums.

Renfrew's question relieved a painful tension.

"You're Bill, I take it?" he said cordially.

"Bill, that's me," responded the horse wrestler who was without doubt as ugly as all get out. Even uglier.

"You said you were held up on the road," said Renfrew. "Who held you up?" And Alan, looking upon the big, trim figure of his friend, felt that he was present in such a story as Renfrew told.

"I said they tried to hold me up," corrected Bill,



grinning terribly. "Them hombres must be feelin' right out o' sorts just about this time I reckon. Me an' ol' Pedro was just lopin' along peaceful when they come out over the road. Four or five of 'em they was an' one of 'em gets old Pedro by the bridle. I just lammed out at 'em and got in some right useful cracks while they get me with a rock or something here on the jaw," and he indicated the cut on his face. "Then I guess they must of got a real good look at me. I ain't exactly a prize beauty in the dark. Anyways me and Pedro didn't have no trouble after that." Again he flashed his teeth in the lamplight. "We all did some right smart yellin', I reckon. Where's Dakota? I calc'lated we'd go back and clean up on that outfit."

Renfrew explained Dakota's absence and the gallant Bill immediately decided to ride forth and meet his partner on the way home. The two men discussed Bill's adventure and the practicability of his plan in crisp, laconic sentences while the Explorers listened, feeling as Alan did, that they were in truth alive in Renfrew's world of adventure. Then suddenly the men ceased talking. A subdued roar came from the direction of the roadway and Bill strode over to the window. Renfrew picked up the lamp, and with a breath plunged the room into darkness.

"Not a sound!" he snapped as the Explorers gasped. Then to Bill who had thrown a window up when the



light went out: "See anything?" And he joined the cowboy at the window.

"It's a mob of dagoes," Bill strove to whisper and rasped his words out terribly. Alan and Billy Loomis, pressing against another window, could see nothing but the blackness; but the sounds of the mob, moving up the river, scuffling on the muddy macadam and answering the sharp shouts of its leaders with a hoarse chatter, were unmistakable. Stragglers seemed to follow the main body of the mob, and after these had passed the watchers waited for a space. Then Bill closed the window and drew down the shades while Renfrew again lighted the lamp as the Explorers pressed about him.

"Now what do you know about that!" Bill spoke softly, as though to himself. "What in thunder do you s'pose that gang's out on the road to-night for?"

Renfrew looked at him with knit brows. "I have only the ghost of an idea," he said.

Then with a grinding of wheels in the mud and a rattle of hoofs Dakota was among them. He burst through the door in unaccustomed haste.

"Git them horses out!" he yelled to Bill. "Them hombres is goin' to bust out the dam at the power plant an' we got to get up to the hills quick. The whole valley'll be flooded in about two shakes! We got to get them horses into the hills."

Renfrew snapped to attention. "I was afraid of



that." He thought for a moment. "Come on!" he cried suddenly. "Get out the horses."

He turned to the boys.

"Leave your packs, fellows," he said, "and come on. If you don't know anything about horses stand back and keep out of the way. If you can help, help. Speed is important. If those fellows work fast on the dam this place may be under water in twenty minutes."

Outside in the blackness of the barnyard there was a turmoil of thrashing, rattling hoofs. Bill and Dakota had lighted gasoline torches and the light from these flashed upon the shining bodies of the ponies as the two men ran them out of the barn. Alan and Billy and Bub with a few other Explorers lent a hand, and in a little while fifteen shining animals were stamping and prancing in the rain while the boys slung the big stock saddles across their sleek backs and drew tight the girths. The men wheeled out a wagon, and to this they harnessed the horses from the buggy. They transferred the provisions from the buggy into this wagon, too.

Dakota, who was supervising the saddling, came over to Alan as he prepared to sling a saddle across the back of a great dun gelding.

"Better lemme do that, son," he said. "Ole Sorghum, he gets real mean after bein' shut up fer a few days."

He took the saddle from Alan. "Now jes' lay hold



er his years," he said. Alan obeyed and the cowboy slung the saddle over and tightened the girth with a quick, easy movement which won Alan's admiration.

Renfrew approached them. He spoke to Dan.

"Now that you fellows are all ready, I'm going to leave the boys with you. Alan, see that the fellows do as Dakota tells them. I've told Billy and Bub. I'm going to ride up to the dam and see if I can stop those maniacs from committing murder. Which is your best horse, Dakota?"

Dakota looked at him wild-eyed.

"Glory be!" he said. "You all can't do nothin' there. An' if the dam goes out before you reach it, you'll die real sudden. You all——"

"Don't waste time," snapped Renfrew. "If that dam goes out, it will mean death and destruction in the valley. Which is your best horse?"

He didn't seem at all excited. He was only in a hurry.

"Sorghum," said Dan, indicating the horse. "He'll buck you through the roof though."

Renfrew made no reply. He turned to Alan and looked into the boy's eyes. "So long," he said, and taking the bridle of the dun gelding from Alan's hand he led him to an open spot. Then seizing the cheek strap in his left hand he adjusted his foot to the stirrup while the animal could only move helplessly in circles. Then with his right hand on the mane he vaulted



quickly to the saddle, and Sorghum still moved in circles till Renfrew was ready to let go the cheek piece. As he did so the horse leapt high in the air and came down stifflegged upon the ground. Finding Renfrew still in the saddle Sorghum then started a series of buck jumps which brought horse and rider dangerously close to the barn. Then Renfrew, who was in a hurry, pulled up sharply on the curb and, as the splendid animal paraded with its forelegs aloft, he brought his quirt down sharply on its flank, swung the animal's head over so that it wheeled on its hind legs and charged forward at a mad gallop for the main road.

For a moment the enchanted boys and the admiring cowmen stood and listened to the hoofbeats until they died away in the distance.

"Shucks!" remarked Bill. "He kin shore ride; but the question is, kin he swim? I just hate to think what those dagoes will do to him if he gets there before they blow it up.

"Now you kids what can't ride, you all git into that wagon," yelled Dan. "We got to hustle. The rest of yer hop on to them cayuses, and grab a holt of a free one." And the cavalcade was under way with a great noise of hoof beats and rumble of wheels. They turned up the main road and followed it until they came to the red dirt road which led up into the hills. And as they rode Alan thought long thoughts. His mind was far ahead with the rider who had so gallantly gone on



## RENFREW OF THE ROYAL MOUNTED

---

alone, racing against death for the sake of uncountable lives. He felt dissatisfied with his part of galloping away to a safe place in the hills.

He drew in a little and waited until Billy Loomis was knee to knee with him. For a moment the two boys rode silently together. Then:

"Say, Billy, sort of look after the other fellows, will you?" said Alan. "I'm going straight ahead to the dam when we reach the dirt road."

But Billy, with a set, determined face, looked into the rain ahead.

"Me, too," he said briefly. "I'm going to see the end of this and the end is going to be at the dam."

"It may be the end of Renfrew," said Alan. "Hurry!"



## CHAPTER XV

### THE VERY END

ALAN and Billy, riding blindly in the dark, veiled by the pouring rain, used every trick of horsemanship which they knew to get speed from their wiry mounts. They sped so swiftly over the macadam that they passed the dirt road which led over the hills to safety without even seeing it. The blackness folded them like a blanket; a wet blanket; and their horses kept the road with an uncanny intelligence. Occasionally they came together so that they touched; but immediately the toiling animals would separate and then only the sound of the hoofs and the panting of the animals gave them company.

Suddenly the horses plunged and reared beneath them. They were thrashing about in water; a gray, ghostly field of it stretched away to their right and the murmur of the moving river was in their ears. They moved to the left and found the edge of the road. It skirted the brink of the river here, and the water had risen and covered it. They moved more carefully now.



and were proceeding at scarcely more than a walk when Alan suddenly bethought him of how Renfrew must have ridden through this place before them.

"He would never have picked his way like this!" he cried. "Come on! We're worrying too much about ourselves!"

And his mount was surprised at the quick upgathering of the reins and the sharp command which sent him forward at a gallop once more. Billy, gritting his teeth, was at his side in a jiffy, and the two plunged on through a whirling spray of water. Alan felt the relentless sweep of the river at his side and shuddered as he pictured the breaking of the dam. The horses twisted and floundered in some mess of liquid mud, and the boys found they had lost the road.

They turned back, plunging through the water once again, seeking frantically for it. They discovered where it left the river and wound upward upon a high bank and from the top of this bank they saw the white glare of the arc light which hung before the power house of the Hamilton Silk Mills, Incorporated. A line of yellow lights neatly spaced, showed them where the dam stretched across the river, and the roar of the water in the spillways came to them like distant thunder.

"Come on, there's time!" yelled Billy and dug his heels into the sides of his mount. Together they



plunged down the hill, immensely excited at finding themselves in this adventure.

Then, suddenly, and as things happened in a nightmare, the roadway was full of men. Their horses were plunging among a sea of faces. Progress stopped and Alan found himself struggling desperately to keep his seat against strong arms which seized his legs and strove to pull him down. He saw Billy disappear among the ugly faces, and he struck out with his fists at those which were nearest him. They seized his wrists then and soon he was on the road, and the captive of a huge Slav who held him by collar and wrist in a manner which made all his struggling futile. They marched down the road, a murmurous procession, which was enlivened by Billy's gallant efforts to escape. Their captors escorted the boys to a spot at the back of some sheds which faced the power house, and here they met with another group, and an electric torch was thrown upon the two disgruntled faces. A conversation ensued which was concealed in a foreign tongue and it was interrupted by the loud protests of an ill-used automobile. It was unmistakably a car of a type which is better known for its quantity than its quality, and with the first sounds of its creak and rattle the men behind the flashlight departed. Alan's captors followed close behind and Bill was brought along, too. As they rounded the corner of the shed, Alan saw in the arc light that the road was crowded with men who formed



a huddled mob about something which was evidently the newly arrived automobile.

"They've got it!" some one cried to Alan's captor.

"Enough to blow up everything," yelled another with a graphic gesture. There were many other remarks in foreign languages, and abruptly Alan's captor left him and joined the mob. Alan looked about for Billy and perceived him standing well away from the mob near the sheds.

"Where'd you suppose Renfrew is?" he asked as Alan approached.

"Search me," said Alan. "I guess they just got some dynamite or something. What d'you think we ought to do?"

"What was Renfrew going to do, do you think?" asked Billy.

The boys peered up at the mob. Some one stood on the running board of the car and was haranguing the rest of them.

Alan looked at the power house. It was a house of concrete and brick, and the arc lamp threw its light upon four wide stone steps which rose to a glass door in front of which was a steel, barred gate. The windows were guarded with bars of steel as well.

"If Renfrew had got through," said Alan with an indescribable feeling of desperation, "he would have stood on those steps and held them back."

"But we——"



## THE VERY END

---

A great roar uprose from the mob; a roar which drowned the clatter of the spillway, and like a wave of men the massed workers moved forward upon the power house. Imprecations, oaths, and wild promises of destruction were lost in the shouting and the tumult; but although they could make out no words the boys knew well the purpose of the mob. To destroy and wreck, and tear down the fortunes of the oppressor. And Alan pictured the valley flood; struck by a wall of water. "Death and destruction," Renfrew had cried.

As the mob surged forward Alan and Billy leapt forward, too. They made for the wide steps with a great, futile intention in their hearts to stem the rush of the mob. But as they came to the lowest step, the door opened and Renfrew himself stepped out into the light, and the door crashed shut behind him. In another second the mob was upon them and Alan and Billy were hurled against the wall of the house and held there at the foot of the steps.

The sudden appearance of Renfrew outside the door held the mob back for a moment. Only two or three tried to rush him and these he threw backward down the steps so that only the close ranks of their comrades prevented them from falling.

There came a volley of curses from the mob.

"It's the spy who got by us!" yelled one.

"Spy!"



"Scab!"

"Smash him!"

And other cries which were not fit to hear were hurled upon him. Renfrew ignored them and ignored, too, the missiles which came hurtling by to spend their force on the door behind him. He fixed his attention upon the few men who stood in the forefront of the mob and addressing them in a voice which resounded over the yells of the others, he seemed to search their faces as he spoke.

"I can't talk to the whole mob," he cried with a ring in his voice which thrilled down Alan's spine. "I'm no orator. But you men who are the leaders, listen to this. I know nothing of your cause. I am a stranger to this part of the country; but I do know that if the dam goes out to-night your cause will be ruined. You are striking for the sake of your families, your children. All right. If the dam goes out you will be murderers. What of your children then?"

As he pronounced the word 'murderers' a hush fell upon the mob. Then some one cried out, "Scab!" And a stone crashed with a thud against Renfrew's breast. He staggered back for a moment, but snapped back to his position over the mob. Leaning forward, fixing his flashing eyes upon the leaders, his voice ringing above the splash of the rain, the roar of the water in the spillway, and the cries of the mob.



## THE VERY END

---

"If you must do this thing," he cried, "I cannot stop you. We could have held you off a while if I had stayed inside. We could even have fired on you through the bars. But I tell you I am your friend." A stick of wood struck him on the face and he passed his hand across the place which started to bleed. "If the dam goes out every farm along the river is ruined. Houses swept away. Many people will be killed. Drowned!"

"Throw him down!"

"Smash him!" voices cried from the rear. A movement came upon the mob which surged forward.

"Stand back! Back!" roared the men who stood in front. They turned their backs on Renfrew and pressed against the mob.

"Hear him out!" yelled some, and others shrieked out in their native tongue. Bricks, stones and chunks of wood were hurled forward.

"You're spoiling your cause! Ruining yourselves and your children!" thundered Renfrew.

"Our children are starving!" shouted one in the multitude.

"If the dam goes out your children will die!" rang Renfrew's voice. "Three thousand workmen live on the flats of the river. If the dam bursts to-night they and their children die in their sleep! Would you kill them? Are you going to slay those children—?"



## RENFREW OF THE ROYAL MOUNTED

---

A great stone struck Renfrew's forehead. Alan heard the crack of it upon the man's skull, and another sickening crack as his head hit the concrete step.

A gasp went up from the mob as Renfrew went down and Alan and Billy leapt for their fallen friend as the mob surged forward.

But Renfrew's words had had a potent influence. Those who had heard him best were turned against the press of the mob from the rear, and divided against itself, the mass of men were struggling and shrieking in the roadway. Those who had been won by Renfrew's words strove by reason and force to hold back their comrades who were intent on pursuing their original purpose.

Alan and Billy saw the mob move back from the steps but knew that any minute might turn the tide of the struggle. They leaned over Renfrew and examined his wound, then finding no artery open nor any sign of a fracture, they attempted to move their friend away. But the struggling mob pressed close upon them, buffeting them about and prohibited them from lifting Renfrew from the ground. Indeed, as the mob surged back and forth heavy boots were perilously near the boys' heads. They toiled and tugged in despair, close to the heels of the scuffling laborers.

"They'll trample him to death!" Alan cried.

There came the thunder of hoofs, and loud shouting on the other side of the fighting mass of men. There



## THE VERY END

---

were stifled cries. Shouts which were muffled in the night air. Like a mob of the theater, the struggling horde scattered before the galloping of many horses. The men melted into blackness—into the haze of rain which surrounded the arc light.

A squad of the state constabulary had arrived. Help had come to them in the last minute, as it does in the melodramas—as it does in life.

“We must get him home!” cried Alan, and his voice faltered in a strange manner. The tall policeman who bent over him seemed to understand thoroughly.

“We’ll get him home all right,” he said.

A frightened man came out of the brick house and quavered in unmanly fear.

“He’s a hero. He’s a hero,” he kept repeating. “They would have blown out the dam. He’s a hero.” The boys ignored him.

“Help us,” they pleaded with the big policeman.

“Better use that jitney,” said the understanding one; and he helped them bear the still form of their friend to the motor car which the mob had left behind.

He returned to them as they prepared to start the car and informed them he was to accompany them and get Renfrew’s story of the affair. He took the driver’s seat and they sat in the back seat, supporting the mute, recumbent form. Renfrew’s face was so white, his breath so labored that Alan found he was afraid for the man’s life.



## RENFREW OF THE ROYAL MOUNTED

---

"He's still unconscious," he whispered to Billy. "It seems like a long time."

The tiny car lurched on in the rain, valiantly facing the night. Alan felt vaguely unhappy and dissatisfied. Somehow the to-morrow promised nothing. There was finality, and the melancholy which always comes with the end of things, in this journey they were making.

He spoke again to Billy, giving voice to his unhappiness.

"It seems as though this is the end of everything. No more Renfrew. Can you imagine it, Billy? No more adventure."

Billy gazed thoughtfully at the water streaming down the windshield, obscuring the road ahead even as the future seemed to Alan darkened and obscured.

"While the heart beats," said Billy, "there is no end." He was quoting Renfrew, and Alan felt the heart beat of the man whose head was on his arm. He felt the cold drizzle of the rain, and the lurch of the little car. He did not feel afraid, and when he glanced downward he saw that Renfrew's eyes were open and looking into his. The man stirred, and Alan smiled upon him.

"There is no end," he said aloud. "There is no end—ever—anyway."

(1)

THE END

3-1979























LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00024931067